

The Society

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## The Elgar Society Journal

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nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

*Front Cover: Sir Edward William Elgar, 1st Baronet OM GCVO (2 June 1857 – 23 February 1934)  
and Caroline Alice, Lady Elgar, née Roberts (9 October 1848 – 7 April 1920) [Elgar Birthplace /  
Arthur Reynolds' Archive]*

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Periodicals: Author, 'Title of article', *Title of periodical*, issue number and date sufficient to identify, page[s]. Thus: Michael Allis, 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', *Music & Letters*, 85 (May 2004), 198.

End a footnote with a full stop, please, and never put a comma before a parenthesis.

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At the end of the essay, add about a hundred words about the author, please.

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## Alice Elgar, Poet of her Time

### Peter Sutton

Edward Elgar set words by over 60 poets. One of them was his wife Alice. In all, she wrote over a hundred poems, but most of them were never published. Of the seventeen that did appear in print – or fifteen, depending how they are counted – the majority did so as the words to Edward's songs. No other composer set any of her work.

This article gives a brief outline of her writing career and sets her work in context by quoting from other poets of the period and from contemporary opinions on poetry. The words of the poems which Edward set are not generally quoted since they are readily available and, regrettably, there is insufficient space to print all the rest or even to mention all the titles. However, a number of Alice's poems can be found in Percy Young's biography, which forms a major source for this article.<sup>1</sup> It also draws heavily on the original manuscript and typescript copies of Alice's writing.<sup>2</sup>



Schemboche's 1885 studio portrait of Caroline Alice Roberts (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

### Family background

Caroline Alice, known as Alice, was the daughter of the Indian Army officer Henry Gee Roberts and his wife Julia Maria, née Raikes. His family background combined the four pillars of upper middle-class life, the Anglican Church, law, medicine and the army, and hers was largely similar: clergy, the army and, further back, the enlightened printing trade. Each brought inherited wealth to the marriage, and a consciousness of their social position. When Roberts retired as a major-general, he was knighted for his contribution to the civil and military management of Indian affairs, while Julia's six brothers also served the East India Company, one of them equally reaching the rank of general.

Alice and her two older brothers were born in India, Frederic Boyd in 1841, Stanley Napier in 1844, and Alice herself on 9 October 1848. Another child had been born in 1839 but died in infancy. However, Alice can have had no direct recollection of India since Roberts sent his family home in

1 Percy M. Young, *Alice Elgar, Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dobson, 1978).

2 I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Joe Tierney and his National Trust colleagues at The Firs in facilitating access to the archive. The originals are now at the British Library.

1850, purchasing a house called Hazeldine outside the village of Redmarley d’Abitot, where the three counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire meet. He continued to serve in India, in what was still the private army of the East India Company, returning to Hazeldine from time to time on leave. He retired in 1859, after taking part in the suppression of the Indian ‘Mutiny’. He died, aged 60, a year later.

In 1850, the parish of Redmarley had a population of around 1200, recently increased by an influx of Chartists, who had purchased local farms and divided them into small plots. The tradesmen included six tailors, thirteen shoemakers, fifteen masons, eighteen carpenters, five thatchers, and seven blacksmiths, while large numbers of women worked at home sewing gloves for Dent and Allcroft of Worcester, whose agent called at the ‘Rose and Crown’ twice a week.



**Redmarley Church**  
(Peter Sutton)

The social elite formed a tight-knit network. Some of its leading members can be identified from the list of donors to the appeal for rebuilding of the parish church that was launched by the Rev. Edward H. Niblett soon after his installation in 1853:

- D. J. Niblett, Esq. (the patron of the living), £200
- Earl Beauchamp (of Madresfield, Malvern), £100
- Rev. E. H. Niblett, £100
- T. Gambier Parry, Esq. (of Highnam, father of the composer), £50
- Lady Palmer (of the Down House, close to Redmarley), £40
- O. Ricardo, Esq., £20
- J. Stallard, Esq., £20
- C. Stokes, Esq., £20
- Doctor Henry, £20
- Colonel Scott, £20.

Alice, by then aged seven, ‘gave £3’, and her father, £10.

The architect was Mr. Francis Niblett, the foundation stone was laid by the Rector’s eldest son, H. Morton Niblett, who would presently succeed his father as Rector, and the porch was given by

Lord Beauchamp in addition to his subscription.<sup>3</sup>

An elementary school was built in 1846, and the indefatigable Edward Niblett began raising funds for an upper school in 1860. However, these were for the lower echelons of society, and Fred and Napier Roberts were enrolled in Cheltenham Boys’ College, for which purpose the Roberts briefly rented a pied-à-terre in the town. Alice remained at home, being educated by governesses, and was consequently much on her own, especially as both boys joined the army in the late 1850s.

Hazeldine at least offered some degree of social life. The Roberts were pillars of the church and supporters of local charities, and a number of cousins and families of adequate social standing were within visiting distance. A carriage and several horses provided Lady Roberts and her daughter with the requisite mobility, and the house, which came with land extending to over 150 acres, was staffed by the usual band of servants.

Besides music and literature, and no doubt some history and a little geography, Alice also learnt modern languages from her governesses, who were native speakers from respectable families. Rosa Burley, who had a German governess and was not one to lavish praise on Alice, remarks in her memoir: ‘I had not met many people in Malvern who had much knowledge of, or interest in, foreign languages or literature and it was pleasant to find that Mrs Elgar shared my own taste for French and German.’<sup>4</sup>

In other words, Alice enjoyed, or endured, a typical upbringing for a young lady of means.

While most such young ladies were expected to marry gentlemen of means, a daughter was sometimes required to stay at home as companion to a widowed parent. Since Major-General Roberts died when his wife was only 45 years of age and Alice was an only daughter, that lot fell to her.

### *Early writing*

Had she not stayed at home, Alice might never have started writing since her earliest known work of substance dates from 1872 or ’73, when she was already in her mid-twenties.

It is not a poem but a geological essay, ‘Worlds from my Window’, describing the landscape around Hazeldine:

...[The Malvern hills] rise somewhat suddenly and abruptly, and although they attain no very great height, they are extremely picturesque and bold in outline, the flatness of the plain on the eastern side probably adding considerably to their apparent size and eminence....

The essay is elegantly written but demonstrates no great poetic sensibility, and it arose out of the work that Alice had been doing for the Rev. William S. Symonds of the neighbouring parish of Pendock, compiling the index to his book on geology, *Records of the Rocks, or Notes on the Geology, Natural History and Antiquities of North and South Wales, Devon and Cornwall*.

Symonds had inherited both the lordship of the manor of Elsdon in Herefordshire and that of Pendock, so that he became his own patron. He was a Justice of the Peace and a Fellow of the Geographical Society, he wrote learned papers on natural history, archaeology and geology, he composed short books for young people on stones and bones, and he published two historical

3 Information about the village is taken from *A Short History of Redmarley d’Abitot*, written in 1928 by H. Morton Niblett, as reprinted in 1981, and from *A Redmarley Gallimaufrey*, both available at [www.redmarley.org.uk](http://www.redmarley.org.uk) and accessed 5 March 2019.

4 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar, the record of a friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 62.

novels, *Malvern Chase* in 1881, concerning ‘an episode of the Wars of the Roses’, and *Hanley Castle*, six years later, which is set in the Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

Symonds’ daughter Hyacinth would in due course marry the naturalist Sir William Jardine, nearly fifty years her senior and, when he died, the widowed Sir Joseph Hooker, President of the Royal Society, who was a friend and associate of Darwin and Sir Charles Lyell, occupant of one of the first chairs in geology.<sup>6</sup> The Jardine connection also embraced Hugh Edwin Strickland of Tewkesbury, a renowned zoologist who married Jardine’s widowed daughter.

Symonds was a leading member of several local naturalists’ clubs, which attracted speakers from such eminent bodies as the British Association for the Promotion of Science. They addressed the debate between Creationism and Darwinism that was shaking the foundations of faith, and the consequent interest in fossils was exemplified by Dr Ralph Grindrod, one of the water cure doctors in Malvern, who maintained a museum of such curiosities.<sup>7</sup> Hyacinth and her parents, and her friend Alice, therefore moved in learned circles, and Alice’s reading included the natural sciences.

An echo of the religious controversy can be found in Alice’s first known poem, ‘Autumn’, which dates from 1877:

Around the gentle breezes sweep,  
Above the vaulted sky is blue  
So deep, so rich in every hue,  
And I, I can but weep.

And why? The spring is gone,  
The early fountain of our life,  
The joy all free from mental strife,  
The ecstasy of morn.

Those spring days passed and in their stead  
The summer glowed on earth anew,  
How full, how strong our faith it grew  
And wide its glory spread.

This burst of heat divine is past  
And hope is weak and faith is gone,  
Our childish joy is from us torn,  
Belief behind us cast.

With restless brain and dim desire  
In pain we grope and falter yet;  
Our heart aglow of old is set,  
No more we see its fire.

So though the gentle breezes sweep  
And golden stands the rustling corn  
I see the joy is past of morn  
And I must weep must weep.

5 *Hanley Castle* was published by the Tewkesbury bookseller William North in association with the London wholesaler Simpkin, Marshall & Co.

6 The Geological Society of London was founded in 1807, and the Ordnance Geological Survey of Great Britain in 1835. Lyell’s chair was at King’s College, London.

7 See Janet Grierson, *Temperance, Therapy and Trilobites* (Malvern: Cora Weaver, 2001).

Matthew Arnold, HM Inspector of Schools and Professor of Poetry at Oxford, who was a generation older than Alice, says the same thing more inventively. His poem ‘Dover Beach’ contains the lines:

The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl’d;  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

In the late 1870s Alice also wrote seven or eight stories for children. These remained unpublished, like ‘Worlds from my Window’ and ‘Autumn’, but were no doubt read to friends and neighbours such as the Niblett, the Scobells (another family of clerics and a JP), the Rev. John and Mrs Lander at Donnington Rectory, and the irrepressible Bakers at Hasfield Court, six miles from Redmarley, whose fortune had been made in the Staffordshire potteries.

The Rev. Ralph Bourne Baker, a retired clergyman, inherited the Hasfield estate from his brother in 1865, and his son William Meath Baker (‘Meath’ because his maternal grandfather was Bishop of Meath), would in due course be commemorated as *Enigma Variation* No. 4. William’s sister Mary, known as Minnie, became step-mother to Dora Penny (Dorabella), *Variation* No. 10, and his sister Dora married Richard Baxter Townshend, *Variation* No. 3. Hence, although the aging Symonds moved away, some of Alice’s younger friends would remain friends after she married. The Landers are also mentioned frequently in her diaries.



Alice and Edward at their homes: Elgar with Carice and Alice on the front steps of Plas Gwyn (20 September 1910; left) and Elgar and Alice standing together in front of Forli, their house in Malvern. (Arthur Reynolds’ Archive)

The reason for her burst of literary activity in the late 1870s, when marriage still lay a decade ahead, is not far to seek: she was about to turn thirty and, expecting to remain single, needed an occupation. As a follow-up to the sadness of ‘Autumn’, she composed a poem entitled ‘Reply’ which was twice as long, four whole sides of the blue paper that she used at Hazeldine. It begins, ‘Weep no more ...’ and essentially says, be comforted by your Christian faith. But it is not that comforting; it is, in Percy Young’s words, a further ‘gloomy contemplation of human misery’.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of 1878 she had written another dozen poems, most of them similarly melancholic. ‘Miserrimus’ was inspired by that one-word inscription on a tombstone set into the floor at one of the entrances to Worcester Cathedral. Like ‘Autumn’, it is in ballad form, but while the former has four beats in the first three lines of each stanza, followed by three, ‘Miserrimus’ has only two beats in the last line:

Swift roll the years and shadows fly,  
The sunbeams gleam, we laugh and sigh,  
Now joy may dawn, now fast decline,  
But one sad memory is thine.  
Miserrimus.

Thou liest in dark despairing gloom  
Unblest in cold, unhonoured tomb;  
Well nigh forgot, well nigh unknown  
Save for that one sad name alone,  
Miserrimus.

The throbbing city’s eager crush  
Sways far and near till evening hush;  
But what to thee the midday surge  
Who answerest with the same drear dirge  
Miserrimus.

The rippling river onward sweeps,  
The peaceful land in richness sleeps;  
And though around the spring notes ring  
No happier strain for thee they bring  
Miserrimus.

The iambic (tee-túm) metre is the natural rhythm of much English speech and of many hymns and folk songs as well as ballads. It is also the rhythm of the iambic pentameter known as the ‘heroic measure’, five feet to the line, often arranged in rhyming couplets. These lines are from Alice’s poem of 1878 entitled ‘Thought’:

Strange Thought with unseen presence haunts our mind,  
Now bears us up, away beyond our kind,  
Or often silent long, at last does speak  
And all astonished we must rise and seek  
The many pathways where it wanders oft.  
Midst breezes keen or fanned by zephyrs soft  
It leads us on and shows our ravished sight  
A lovely scene with forms enchanted dight...

8 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 63.

Alice also experimented with a trochaic metre, in which the stress falls on the first syllable of each foot (túm-tee), a metre much used by Longfellow. Here are her ‘Songs of the Seasons and Hope’:

*Spring*

Hasten, Spring, the charm to break  
Let the captive blossoms free;  
Long they wait for thy sweet sake,  
Sad and wearying for thee.  
Hope thou holdest by the hand  
Straying through the flowering land.

*Summer*

Summer promised by the Spring  
Comes, and now the days may sleep.  
Through the greenwood no notes ring,  
The air is stilled in hush too deep.  
Hope is faded and must fall  
For the joys, we hold them all.

*Autumn*

Autumn glows and stirs the air  
Earth uplifts her languid head;  
Ripened is the promise fair  
Grapes and corn their riches shed.  
Hope may sigh and sink to rest  
Knowing Earth is crowned and blest.

*Winter*

Winter comes and brings the snow,  
Weeps the Earth an icy tear  
O’er her fallen heads bent low  
Dying, dying with the year.  
Hope may sleep, but sleeping dreams  
[and the]Springtime wakes [wakening] and gleams.<sup>9</sup>

Not all her 1870s poems are concerned with the passage of time. ‘The Fight for the Shrine’ recounts an attack on ancient Delphi in response to reports in the *New Quarterly* of recent archaeological vandalism. After revision, the typed version preserved in the archive starts each line with a trochee (túm-tee) before reverting to the iambic tee-túm. It begins:

Down swept the Gauls with might  
Dread like a cloud of night;  
Burning to spoil the land  
Reached they the Grecian strand...

In ‘On a Castle in Northern Ireland’, inspired by Cousin Vee Raikes’s account of a visit to the Ulster coast, Alice varies the metre again, placing two unstressed syllables before the stress:

9 This line shows several deletions and remains unfinished.

Oh I dwell in my castle on high,  
I look down on the rocks and the deep,  
And the hurrying sunbeams swiftly fly  
And the storm riven clouds onwards sweep.

Oh the breakers they clash and they moan,  
And the seabirds discordantly shriek,  
The wild winds oh they howl and they groan  
And the ships near haven would seek.

Three more stanzas follow, before the poem concludes:

Oh I dwell in my Castle alone  
For the earth has no joy nor the sea  
And I mock at the weary wind's moan;  
It is lone and forsaken like me.

And in a poem simply headed 'To -----' she again mixes the stress pattern, though lacking the self-confidence to be as flexible as Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' in either rhythm or rhyme:

Thou lullest thy soul as with sighs of the deep  
'Mongst shadows the vainest, the sweetest to sleep,  
Midst visions soft-cradled of measureless bliss  
Only roused the sweet pain by a dream-covered kiss...

Alice also tackled what was often regarded as the acme of versification: the 14-line sonnet, with ten syllables to the line like the 'heroic measure'. It originated in Italy, notably with Petrarch and Dante, and was introduced to England in the sixteenth century. Alice was unquestionably aware of these origins – later in life she translated a Dante sonnet – and of the requirement that the subject matter should, as R.F. Brewer puts it in *The Art of Versification*, published toward the end of Alice's life, 'consist of one idea, or one emotion elaborately and continuously wrought out throughout, and complete in itself. The principal idea should be stated in the first quatrain, and illustrated and elaborated in the second... In each of the two tercets it should be again treated differently, and brought to a close with a dignity fully equal to the opening note, combined with epigrammatic force.'<sup>10</sup>

In English verse, there are two main variants of the sonnet: the Petrarchan, described above, which rhymes a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, c-d-e, and the Shakespearean, divided into three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g.

Alice began with the latter, and in the opening line of 'New Year' she makes reference to Shakespeare (*As You Like It* Act II Scene 7):

Blow, blow thou midnight wind, thy strong, wild wing  
Bears fitful, fainting sounds of distant chimes.  
Lo! through the starlit night serene they ring  
And breathe strange words of ever-changing times.

10 R.F. Brewer, *The Art of Versification and the Technicalities of Poetry* (Edinburgh: John Grant, revised edition 1925), 204. This is not the Brewer of the *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, which was published in 1870.

They say the New Year and the Old have met,  
Have clasped each other's hands one moment's space.  
Then swiftly sank the Old, in glory set,  
To silent death, the while the New its race  
Through untrod days began. And yet the same  
Will flow its tide, past pleasant, sunny isles  
To wrecks of hope and joys grown dim. But flame  
Clear stars of God sent Love, and Hope e'er smiles  
Through darkness chill, and bids us trust that well  
For us the Year now whispering with the bell.

The rhyme scheme, the syllable count and the stress pattern are as regular as clockwork (counting 'whispering' as two syllables), but the break after the first eight lines, the 'octet', falls imperfectly in the middle of the ninth line, and the syntax is constrained by the metre towards the end. Christina Rossetti on the other hand, eighteen years Alice's senior, adopts the Petrarchan scheme and follows it precisely. Refreshingly, she also uses natural word order and eschews 'poetic' language, addressing the reader in the idiom of the day:<sup>11</sup>

*Remember*

Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Alice also tried unrhymed blank heroic verse, which 'embalmed the masterpieces of English poetry, Milton's epics and Shakespeare's dramas.'<sup>12</sup> 'Senlac' begins:

The fight was o'er, the battle cries all hushed  
And weary sank the victors to their rest...

and it continues for another hundred lines. Even longer is 'A Vision of the Night', a dream of being lifted up among the stars away from the 'clang' of the earth, which tramps on for over 150 lines.

Soon after, Alice embarked on the long blank-verse narrative poem *Isabel Trevithoe*, which was elegantly printed at the end of 1878, doubtless at her own expense, by the Charing Cross Publishing Company and runs to 62 pages of text. As in much of her early writing, she disguises her female identity by naming the author simply 'C.A.R.'

11 Even Wordsworth may make no break between sections.

12 R.F. Brewer, p. 184.

Charing Cross produced a large number of works, such as *The Banker*, ‘a play in four acts and in prose and verse’ by Charles Richardson (1881), *Leaves from a Mid’s Diary* by Douglas Vernon (presumably a midshipman, 1881), novels including *Nature’s Nobility* by John Newall (1879), *In Forest Glades* by the anonymous S.N.E.M. (1881) and, intriguingly, *The Life of a Rock Scorpion* by Flora Calpensis (also 1881).<sup>13</sup> It is conceivable that Alice heard about the Charing Cross company through *Ours*, a ‘holiday quarterly’ which it published from 1878.

In her poem, Sir Stephen Trevithoe, whose estate is in Cornwall, dies,

And left his only child alone, unwed,  
And homeless too, for strictly weighed th’entail  
On all his land...

One day, she is sure, her affianced will return from distant parts to claim her, but until that happy day, she determines to go to London to help the poor and the sick:

...noble work...  
Was found, and Isabel each day set forth  
To write and work in gloomy office-rooms,  
Beneath the rule of Lady President,  
Who gathered many such as Isabel  
To aid her in her task...

In the end her lover returns and they live happily, or at least contentedly, ever after. However, Isabel is not that pleased. She says to her man not quite ‘Where were you all this time?’ but something pretty close:

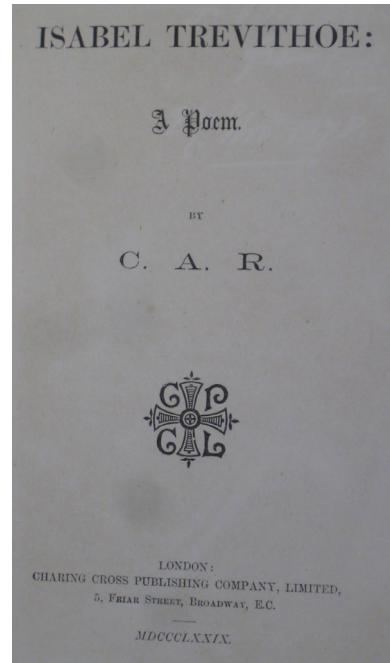
Think not because some women must go forth  
And tread the world alone, slow pave their way  
To slender means or e’en a useful life,  
Think not they deem such path their highest good  
Or glory in their solitude; not so;  
Full oft they long for touch of shelt’ring hand...

There is an obvious autobiographical note here. Although she was not an orphan since her mother lived until 1887, Alice’s father had spent his career away in India, rather like Isabel’s intended, and she lacked a masculine ‘sheltering hand’.

According to Percy Young, the inspiration for the story may have been that in March 1878 ‘the Secretary of State for the Colonies spoke in Cheltenham on Government legislation “on the subject of artisans’ dwellings: to secure them better air, better houses, and homes that they might be proud to call their own”’. This speech was commented on in Arthur Arnold’s article on “Socialism” in... the *New Quarterly*.<sup>14</sup>

13 Information from the British Library catalogue.

14 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 73.



Title page of *Isabel Trevithoe*  
(Peter Sutton)

That may well be the case. As we have seen, the *New Quarterly* was the source for ‘The Fight for the Shrine’.

Alice pasted the press reviews of *Isabel Trevithoe* into a scrapbook. The *Civil Service Gazette* stated that ‘C.A.R. has selected the most difficult of all verse to shine in, and that he has succeeded adds greatly to the praise which is his due,’ the *Greenock Telegraph* remarked that despite the obvious influence of Tennyson, there is ‘a strong vein of original thought’, the *Cambridge Express* opined that ‘it contains an interesting tale, suitable for our young friends in the Christmas recess,’ the *Falkirk Herald* said that it ‘possesses an evenness of rhythm, and quietness of cadence,’ and the *Hackney Telegraph* said ‘there is much that is good.’ On the other hand, *Public Opinion* and the *Weekly Times* only called it a poem ‘of promise’, the *Leicester Journal* declared that ‘there are many lines which with a little trouble and attention, might have been materially improved,’ *The Scotsman* said that ‘the writer seldom rises above, if she does not fall below, the dead level of mediocrity,’ and *The Sunday Times* stated baldly that ‘[i]t has little merit, from the narrative standpoint, or the poetic.’ The *Malvern Times* dismissed the poem in four lines, remarking that ‘[b]lank verse should be attempted only by master minds.’

The publisher, and indirectly Alice, had spent time and money sending copies of the poem to newspapers throughout the country, and she had presumably used a cuttings service to garner the results, only to be disappointed. The reaction of the local *Malvern Times* must have been particularly galling.

Doggedly, however, she pressed on. She again refers to Cornwall in 1879 in the sonnet ‘To the Sea at Porth-kernow’, ‘prompted, no doubt, by Roden Noel’s “Rambles by Cornish Seas” in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 1876’:<sup>15</sup>

Thou rollest on with mighty waves, spray-crowned,  
And castest them with lordly mien, O sea,  
On shelving sands where once hoar rocks dark frowned,  
But worn with every tide have ceased to be.  
The same art thou, and thy indifferent wave  
Recks not of changes in the world of men,  
Nor marks the growth of kingdoms nor their grave.  
As strong thy tide, as blue thy breakers then,  
When savage Britons roamed the untilled lands,  
As carelessly they broke in cool disdain,  
When sailed from far the old Phoenician bands  
Or when in later years the hopes of Spain  
Were wrecked – and thou of change wilt bear no trace,  
Thou haughty main, when passed has all our race.

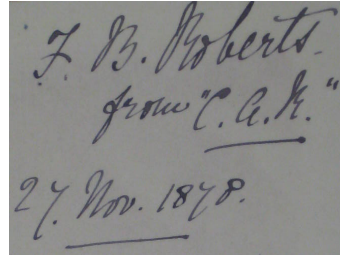
Once more, this follows the ‘Shakespearean’ rhyme scheme and has inconsistent breaks between sections.

15 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 64.



Another poem from 1879, 'Telle est la vie – quelquefois', is much sadder:

And that is past and that  
And what yet may remain?  
Dim burning eyes  
Slow sobs that rise  
No more than that.  
And gladsome days are o'er  
The laugh is laughed and still  
And hearts grow cold  
And you grow old  
And summer's o'er.  
But life wears towards its end  
And shadows gleam and pass  
Partings are said  
Faces have fled  
Toiling is o'er.



Alice's dedication of a copy of *Isabel Trevithoe* to her brother Fred.  
(Peter Sutton)

### Rhythm and rhyme

Rhythm is the key feature of Victorian poetry. To quote R.F. Brewer again, it is rhythm 'which constitutes the essential difference between poetry and prose... The poet must always conform to metrical laws, while his brother artist [the prose writer] only occasionally falls under their seductive influence.'<sup>16</sup>

Many poets today do not keep to a strict metre, and if they do, they often disguise the fact, but in Alice's day the poet's task was to construct a thing of beauty within a set framework, just as a musician used keys, chord structures and so on. R.F. Brewer once more: '...prose seeks for the most part to instruct, whereas the aim of the poet is to give pleasure.'<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, in the view of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, editor of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, first published in 1900, 'we must constantly bear in mind that verse being metrical, keeps the character originally imposed on it by musical accompaniment and must always, however far the remove, be referred back to its origin and to the emotion which music excites.'<sup>18</sup>

As for rhyme, Robert Lynd says in his Introduction to an anthology published around the time of Alice's death, '...rhyme makes a fact double a fact because it makes it memorable.... The memory desires patterns, whether of metre or rhyme or alliteration, and the pattern in its turn excites the imagination to make new and unexpected uses of it.'<sup>19</sup>

To assist struggling poets, Brewer sets out the rules of versification, including in his book a rhyming dictionary and templates for the established metrical forms with their various rhyme schemes: odes, ballads, elegies, sonnets, blank verse hexameters and pentameters, and what he calls 'trifles' such as roundels, sestinas and villanelles, and he explains the syllabic structure used

16 R.F. Brewer, pp. 2 & 4.

17 R.F. Brewer, p. 4.

18 Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 1917, reprint 2015 from Dodo Press, www.dodopress.co.uk), 47.

19 *An Anthology of Modern Verse chosen by A. Methuen, with an Introduction by Robert Lynd* (London: Methuen, 1921), xiv.

to build each line of these: iamb, trochee, anapaest (tee-tee-túm), dactyl (túm-tee-tee) and spondee (túm-túm).

Furthermore, he says that 'the style and *diction* of poetry differs [sic] in many respects from that of prose...hence it chooses picturesque images and quaint words and epithets... Metaphors, similes, and indeed all the rhetorical figures of speech... There are many words protected by poetic association from vulgar use, such as: *woe, ire, blissful, a-weary, haply, list, ken, methinks, morn* and *eve, thou* and *ye* for you.'<sup>20</sup>

Like most Victorian poets, Alice accepted these strictures: we have encountered her composing sonnets and ballads, and rhymed and blank verse pentameters, and she often employs such archaisms as *midst* and *'mongst* ('To -----'), *dight* ('Thought'), 'full oft' (*Isabel Trevithoe*), not to mention *Oh* ('On a Castle in Northern Ireland'), *lo!* ('New Year') and *thee* and *thou*. Moreover, she follows the custom of inverting subject and verb, and noun and adjective: 'will flow its tide'... 'through darkness chill' ('New Year'), and of adding 'do', 'does' and 'did' to verbs in the interest of rhyme: 'Or often silent long, at last does speak / And all astonished we must rise and seek ('Thought').

She did not learn these rules of rhythm and rhyme and lexis at school. Instead, she acquired them from informed conversation, from recommendations by family and friends, from her governesses, and above all from her own reading. Her mother's membership of the London Library, which despatched books to members by post, was of particular importance, and Alice continued the subscription after Lady Roberts died.

It is not known exactly which poets she read, but as Percy Young notes, 'the chapters of her one published novel *Marchcroft Manor*, which appeared in 1882...are headed by quotations from Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Emerson, Dante, Hans Christian Andersen, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Homer, Spenser, Chaucer and Shakespeare.'<sup>21</sup>

Alfred, Lord Tennyson would certainly have exercised an influence, as the *Greenock Telegraph* remarked; he was Poet Laureate from 1850 and the most celebrated British poet of his age. Professor John Meiklejohn writes in one of his many nineteenth-century schoolbooks that Tennyson 'is at home equally in the slowest, most tranquil and most meditative of rhythms, and in the rapidest and most impulsive.' To prove it, he gives two examples. The slow lines are 'written on a woman who is dying of a lingering disease':

Fair is her cottage in its place,  
Where yon broad water sweetly slowly glides:  
It sees itself from thatch to base  
Dream in the sliding tides.  
And fairer she: but ah! how soon to die!  
Her quiet dream of life this hour may cease:  
Her peaceful being slowly passes by  
To some more perfect peace.

The second example is also iambic, but 'driven on with the most rapid march and vigorous rhythm':<sup>22</sup>

20 R.F. Brewer, pp. 4-5.

21 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 79.

22 J.M.D. Meiklejohn, *An Outline of the History of English Literature* (London: Alfred M. Holden, n.d. [1880s]), 86.

He rose at dawn and, fired with hope,  
 Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,  
 And reached the ship and caught the rope  
 And whistled to the morning-star.

As for Emerson, in the early 1870s Alice had, probably for her own amusement, translated from German a 40-page essay about him that was contained in a book that she may have been given.<sup>23</sup>

Here is Emerson following the fashion by including a classical reference (to the Latin name of the Fates), and employing 'poetic' language, 'thou', 'haply' and 'chaos dark', just as Alice does. However, there is a knowing playfulness to the content, the rhythm and the rhyming which Alice does not match:

*Nemesis*

Already blushes in thy cheek  
 The bosom-thought which thou must speak;  
 The bird, how far it haply roam  
 By cloud or isle, is flying home;  
 The maiden fears, and fearing runs  
 Into the charmed snare she shuns;  
 And every man, in love or pride,  
 Of his fate is never wide.  
 Will a woman's fan the ocean smooth?  
 Or prayers the stony Parcae soothe,  
 Or coax the thunder from its mark?  
 Or tapers light the chaos dark?  
 In spite of Virtue and the Muse,  
 Nemesis will have her dues,  
 And all our struggles and our toils  
 Tighter wind the giant coils.

F.T. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, first published in 1861 when Alice was twelve, provides as good a guide as any to the other poets that she would have read. In addition to Shakespeare, Spenser and Tennyson, Palgrave includes Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Cowper, Thomas Dekker, Michael Drayton, John Dryden, Thomas Gray, Robert Herrick, Thomas Hood, Ben Jonson, John Keats, Charles Lamb, Walter Savage Landor, Andrew Marvell, John Milton, Alexander Pope, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Southey, and Henry Vaughan.

In the 1870s it is probable that Alice also came across the work of poets born in the 1810s and 1820s, not just Matthew Arnold, but also Charles Kingsley (a friend of Sir Joseph Hooker), Coventry Patmore, George Meredith, and Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti.

23 'Ralph Waldo Emerson.' In Hermann Grimm, *Neue Essays über Kunst und Literatur* (Ferd. Dümmler Verlagsbuchhandlung, Harrwitz und Gossmann), n.d.



Print from a Birthplace Album photograph of Alice chatting to Troyte Griffith in the garden of Craeg Lea (1899) (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

*The early 1880s*

If the 1870s were a time of apprenticeship, the 1880s would eventually become a decade of some success for Alice, but they began much the same as before. In 1880, she visited the Grosvenor Gallery in London, where she saw 'The Golden Stairs' by Burne-Jones, depicting what she calls a 'company of blessed damsels', and she was moved to write a substantial essay headed 'The Ideal in the Past' and to draft a poem entitled 'The Golden Stair' [sic]:

In other world than thine we dwell  
 And morn and eve our praises swell  
 As climbing slow the amber stair  
 We reach a pure, serener air.  
 But not for thee to know our like  
 Where sheltered well from heat and strife  
 We pass adown the Golden Stair  
 Nor time nor age can touch us there.  
 For nothing earthly do they care  
 But ever dreaming onward fare,  
 With pensive, distant air,  
 Adown the Golden Stair.

In response to 'Love and Death' by G.F. Watts, she also wrote a long, mournful poem in somewhat irregular blank verse with the same title as the painting, narrating the imaginary story of the two lovers depicted in it. The poem is headed by the scene-setting note 'Luigi looks out through the casement on to the terrace where Ione is walking.' Luigi sees her, and she responds:

‘Luigi, see the stars, far more serene  
With more translucent blaze they glow than wont,  
And clear as pale blue crystal is the sky.’

Luigi replies:

‘I cannot see the stars, Beloved, thy face  
I seek, so dear its sight, it draws a veil  
Which blinds me...’  
‘O love,’ Ione cried, ‘what sight, what sound  
Can move thee thus, I never knew thee fear.  
’Twas but the rustle of the brown owl’s wing.’

However, Luigi’s premonition proves accurate:

He sees a shadow wave, a shadow grow  
And slowly deepen to a tall spare form  
With face of ashen grey, whose thin hand bore  
A scythe, on which the starlight played with cold...

Later, after Death has taken Ione, Luigi looks again and concludes:

‘So true it is that stronger far than Death  
Is Love; for treasured safe is every look  
And touch of her I loved, and she is mine  
And rules my life, although unblest mine eyes  
By her dear sight, my ear by her light step...  
Will welcome me, and all our pain forgot  
Together shall we dwell in paradise,  
And smiling murmur once again, ‘So true,  
So true that stronger far than Death is Love.’

Embedded in the 200 lines is the following poem, which throbs with ultimate hope and to which Alice gave a subtly different title, ‘Love or Death’:

Singing, singing, tell me ye,  
Ye that Love’s disciple be,  
Who is stronger than great Love  
Shape below, or power above?  
Sighing, sighing, tell me ye,  
Ye that Death’s dark pinions see,  
Stronger deem ye, is there none?  
Swifter, mightier, no not one?  
Sobbing, sobbing, tell me ye,  
Are they dead, ye lived to see,  
Are they gone and all forgot?  
Is life sweet now they are not?  
Smiling, smiling, tell me ye,  
Dear as ever they to ye:  
Changeless in the heart they dwell,  
Holy, blameless, treasured well.  
Singing, singing, tell me ye,  
Ye that faithful spirits be,  
Though Death’s bitter touch so cold.

Tell ye me with every breath  
Love has wondrous strength untold,  
Love will higher might unfold;  
Greater far is Love than Death.

Alice’s long iambic-pentameter poem ‘Storm or Calm’, of similar date, covers some of the same ground, opening with these thoughts on pain and joy:

In fitful measure beats the pulse of life  
And as the skiff is tossed amidst the strife  
Of loud disdainful waves, e’en so from pain  
To joy is tossed the eager soul, again  
To taste anew the pangs of woe and dread,  
Yet midst the divers, ’wilderer paths I tread  
Which lead across the world, I mark a face  
Sometimes amongst the throng, on which has place  
A look of peace. Peace on the quiet brow  
And peace within in the quiet eyes lies now...

Years later, in 1888, she added a disconsolate note in pencil that reads: ‘A true picture of A’s self.’

From the examples given so far, it should be evident that she was constantly lamenting the passing of time, indulging in the pangs of love, enjoying the pathetic fallacy, contemplating mortality and death, and worrying about duty and her soul.

As were other Victorian poets. While their number included writers as varied in their approach as Swinburne, Hopkins and Edward Lear, the topics addressed by Alice were seen by many in the nineteenth century as the proper stuff of poetry. Here is a poem about love by Alice Meynell, who was born around 1850 and died in 1922, and was therefore Alice’s almost exact contemporary.

*At Night*

Home, home from the horizon far and clear,  
Hither the soft wings sweep;  
Flocks of the memories of the day draw near  
The dovecote doors of sleep.

O, which are they that come through sweetest light  
Of all these homing birds?  
Which with the straightest and the swiftest flight?  
Your words to me, your words!

Love, memories and birds sweeping, almost as Alice might have expressed herself, but the image of the dovecote doors gives the poem additional originality. That may explain why Meynell’s work was published in many more periodicals than Alice’s, and still appears in anthologies.

And here is a poem entitled ‘The Soul’ by another contemporary, George Barlow, born in 1847, practising the same kind of structural repetition as Alice in ‘Love or Death’:

The Soul shall burst her fetters  
At last and shall be  
As the stars, as the wind, as the night,  
As the sun, as the sea.

The Soul shall struggle and stand  
In the end swift and free  
As the stars, as the wind, as the night,  
As the sun, as the sea.

The Soul shall be crown'd and calm,  
Eyes fearless – and she  
Shall be queen of the wind and the night,  
Stars, sun and the sea.

In 'A Vision of the Night', Alice too had been lifted up into the heavens.

In 1882, Remington and Co. of London published her two-volume novel *Marchcroft Manor*, in which she demonstrates the same social conscience as in *Isabel Trevithoe*. The hero of the novel, Julian De Tressanay, unexpectedly inherits an estate and attempts to be a model landowner, treating his tenants and servants with unwonted respect and seeking to overcome their mistrust.

Remington was similar to the Charing Cross publishing company, issuing fiction including *Ashford* by Anne Blount (1878), *Smuts and Diamonds* 'with other stories' by Selina Gaye (1879), and *Justice Warren's Daughter* by Olive M. Birrell (1883), along with non-fiction such as *Beneath Parnassian Clouds and Olympian Sunshine* by C.G. Saunders Forster (1887).<sup>24</sup> Titles advertised inside the covers of *Marchcroft Manor* include *The Life and Letters of Berlioz*, translated by H. Mainwaring Dunstan, and two more novels, *Tempted of the Devil* and *A Royal Amour*.

Alice paid £70 for 400 copies of *Marchcroft Manor*, with the option of another 600 if there were sufficient demand, and she and Remington were to share the proceeds equally after deduction of advertising costs.<sup>25</sup> On that basis it is unlikely that she recouped her outlay, but there was nothing unusual in this arrangement. Joseph Henry Shorthouse, a relatively successful novelist, had 100 copies of *John Inglesant* 'privately printed' in 1880, before Macmillan published it in 1881.<sup>26</sup>

Alice, who read Shorthouse's novel at some point, no doubt hoped that a well-established publisher would also take up *Marchcroft Manor*. Unfortunately, it was greeted no more warmly than *Isabel Trevithoe*. *The Standard* called it 'a pretty and very readable novel', the *Athenaeum* said that despite certain deficiencies it made 'a good impression', and *The Glasgow Herald* declared that '[w]e find it very difficult to do justice to the singular charm of *Marchcroft Manor*.' But *The Scotsman* was yet more equivocal, remarking that it was 'not one that any but a very blasé novel-reader will be inclined to yawn over,' while *The Academy* said, '[e]verybody's moral tone is elevated, and everybody is married. What more could the most inexorable reader of novels desire?' Worse, *The Morning Post* 'deplored that writers who have not more to say than the author of *Marchcroft Manor* should insist on rushing into print,' and *The Saturday Review* dismissed it as '... a deal of tall talk and a very plentiful lack of matter... We recommend the author... to leave ardent reformers and over-cultivated idiots to go their own way in peace.'

To her credit, Alice again preserved the cuttings of both good and bad reviews in her scrapbook.

And again, she did not stop writing. In the autumn of 1882 she produced a poem for the newborn daughter of her friends the Landers, and in the following year, while travelling in Italy with her mother to assuage their grief at the death of Alice's brother Fred, she penned another sad (túm-tee) ballad entitled 'Whither?' about time and the sea. It begins:

24 Information from the British Library catalogue.

25 I am indebted to Chris Bennett for this information.

26 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Henry-Shorthouse> accessed 5 March 2019

Flow the sails and flies the boat,  
Skims the waves as shadow light,  
Swift it speeds to port remote  
Nor swerves nor slackens in its flight.

and it ends:

Goal unknown and haven past,  
Refuge none upon the lee;  
God grant it find a port at last  
And rest from tossings of the sea.

Up to now, none of Alice's work, apart from her index to *Records of the Rocks, Isabel Trevithoe* and *Marchcroft Manor*, had been published.

But her two poems 'The Wind at Dawn', written in 1880, and 'Yesterday', were printed in *Home Chimes* in 1884, along with her short story 'Two Summers'. This journal, published by Richard Willoughby and edited by F.W. Robinson, ran weekly and then monthly from 1884 to 1894 and attracted contributions from prose writers such as J.M. Barrie and Jerome K. Jerome, and poems by Swinburne, Bret Harte and Coventry Patmore, all three of whose work Edward would set to music in due course. So Alice was in distinguished company, and must have felt immensely pleased and relieved. The words of 'The Wind at Dawn' are well known from Edward's later setting.

Here is another 1884 poem, 'Destiny', again concerned with fate and social duty. It is one of the most original of Alice's poems:

How strange our life on earth  
Where none can rule their birth  
Or influence the state  
In which their days by fate  
Ordained, must wear to eve,  
The world behind them leave.

Behold this one in manhood's prime,  
His strength and energy, his prime,  
To some fierce battle for the right  
Should all be given; his own might  
He feels, and burns with strong desire  
To work and move; for steeped in fire  
His soul, he longs to do and dare  
And live through all the shining glare  
Of day. Yet no, he must be still  
His hours with contemplation fill  
And wearily thus drags away  
In cool retired shades the day.

But yet another picture see –  
Far from the crowding world would flee  
This tender shrinking soul, but no,  
For him no solitude, where slow  
The peaceful hours' silent flight,

The peaceful day, the peaceful night,  
 Would soothe a heart whose very breath  
 Is rest, and strife far worse than death.  
 Yet he is chosen out from all,  
 And whether he may stand or fall,  
 He e'er must lead the van, and stand!  
 Amidst the crowds, the fev'rous band  
 Who push him on and seize his hours  
 And cry not his, but theirs, his powers –  
 And on and on it flows  
 And on and on it goes  
 This same strange history;  
 The one would seek the light,  
 The other long for night,  
 So runs the mystery.

Among Alice's other poems of the mid-1880s are 'Two Lives', the story of a woman waiting once again for the long-delayed return of her lover, and 'Calypso's Lament', which begins:

Gone, gone, and left me alone,  
 And I, a goddess, must moan,  
 And I, a goddess, must wail,  
 As I watch the last flash of his sail...

She also wrote 'Self-Delusion', ironically lamenting her unwanted 'freedom':

Free? – Yes, as air may be  
 Bound by no ring or book,  
 Fetters no need to brook  
 Held by no word or vow  
 Pledged to none,  
 Perfect my liberty...

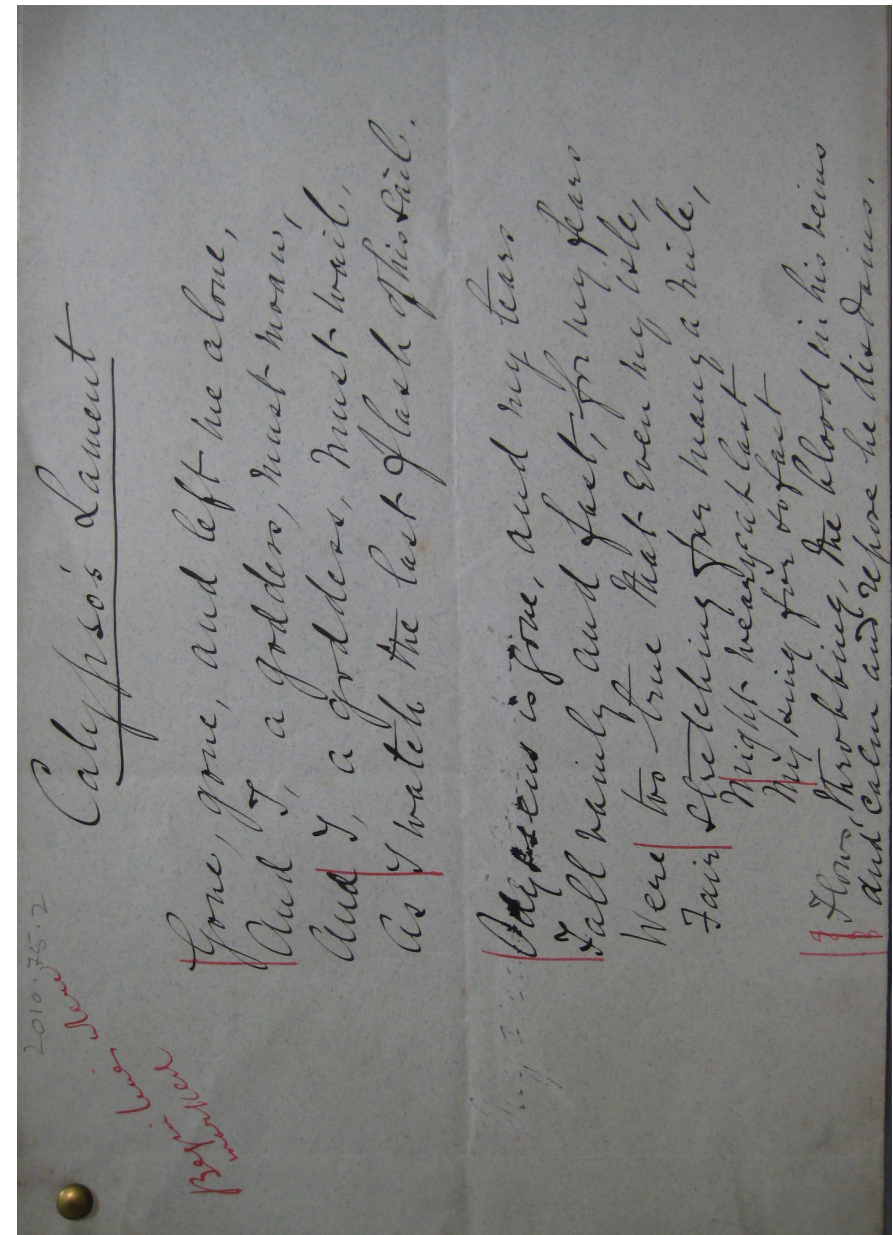
### The meeting with Edward

Alice became Edward's piano pupil in October 1886, and glimpsed the chance to end her forced freedom. But the following year she still wrote the sad poem 'Lyre and Song':

Sound strong and clear my Lyre,  
 Flame in my heart my Song...  
 But love grew false and cold,  
 Fame proved an empty tale...  
 The dream of life is told,  
 The star of hope is pale...

It ends:

Seek love and fame who may,  
 Leave me my Lyre and Song.



Calypso's Lament, with indentations marked for typing (Peter Sutton)

‘To emulate Marcus Aurelius’, a seven-stanza poem, is no happier. It begins:

Too long and oh, too hard you say,  
To reach such height,  
And life is short for such assay  
So small our might.

Stay not your heart with idle sigh,  
So souled you must  
Seek something far, ere yet you die  
And sink to dust...

Nor is the poem ‘Renunciation’:

The mists arise from the river  
And spread in their fleecy folds,  
O’er banks where the rushes quiver  
And the stream his slow passage holds.

The sun sinks down in the red west,  
Peace may linger on vale and hill,  
Unlike my heart with its unrest  
And pain that no quiet can still.

O cold and calm is thy heart, love,  
And wonder would gleam in thine eyes  
To dream that thou bearest a part, love,  
In longing and grief and sighs.

But lest a pang thou should’st feel, dear,  
I will bury love out of sight;  
Deep down to save thee a sigh, dear,  
In the depth and dark of night.

When Lady Roberts died on 29 May 1887, freeing Alice from her decades of filial duty, she began, hesitantly, to write more about love, albeit distant and divine rather than immediate and human. Her technical ability was also developing. The sonnet ‘Ways to the Mount’ is no longer Shakespearean but Petrarchan, with more or less clear breaks of sense between the two quatrains and the sestet:

Behold the Mount of God: sublime and hoar  
Beyond what man may dream, it towers on high.  
The fireset stars, lest aught unclean draw nigh,  
Keep flaming watch below their azure floor:  
Alas! That many paths should stretch before  
The Mount: with tears some seek the way and sigh  
To wander ’midst the shades that round them lie,  
But happier they, than those who seek no more.  
Could we descry but one, one path alone  
How easy were the way and plain to take;  
But He who dwells on that high, awful Mount,

Leaves us to choose: if so our steps we count  
With humble fear, we trust that for his sake  
We find the goal where Love will all atone.

The imagery of the fireset stars and the paths stretching out before the Mount brings the poem to life, and another sonnet, ‘It is appointed to all men to die once’, paraphrasing a sermon by Canon Knox Little at Worcester Cathedral, opens with another vivid image:

Beat not so fiercely ’gainst the caging bar  
Which hems thy sphere, O longing heart. The height  
Of pain endured, thy eager hopes most bright  
Will pale as in obscuring cloud, the star,  
For from thy woe or bliss, Death is not far...

Death was a Victorian obsession, with its closed shutters, black crêpe, mute mourners and elaborate memorials. It is scarcely surprising, given the high infant mortality, frequent death in childbirth, incurable diseases, and dismal life expectancy: needle-makers in Redditch seldom lived beyond twenty-five.

This poem by William Watson, born in 1858, combines death with doubt:

*The Great Misgiving*

‘Not ours,’ say some, ‘the thought of death to dread;  
Asking no heaven, we fear no fabled hell:  
Life is a feast, and we have banqueted –  
Shall not the worms as well?’

‘The after-silence, when the feast is o’er,  
And void the places where the minstrels stood,  
Differs in nought from what hath been before,  
And is nor ill nor good.’

Ah, but the Apparition – the dumb sign –  
The beckoning finger bidding me forgo  
The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,  
The songs, the festal glow!

And ah!, to know not, while with friends I sit,  
And while the purple joy is pass’d about,  
Whether ’tis ampler day divinely lit  
Or homeless night without;

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see  
New prospects, or fall sheer – a blinded thing!  
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,  
And there, O death, thy sting.

The same dread Apparition appeared in Alice’s poem about Luigi, written in 1880, when Darwinist doubt still haunted her.

Sometimes, however, it is not death or doubt that troubles her, but simply ‘Weltschmerz’. ‘The

World it is Wide', written in 1888, begins:

The world it is wide, and long is the way,  
(I wonder and gaze at it all)  
I travel along  
With the same bitter song  
And the wound in my heart alway...

On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that Alice's writing, of whatever date, is necessarily an expression of her true feelings. She does not, for instance, comment on her acceptance of the Catholic faith in order to please Edward, or his subsequent abandonment of it, which could have been the subject of heartfelt poems. Nor are her diaries any more revealing: 'Mrs W.H. Raikes called', 'E to London at 2.15', 'Mass at Belmont, Connelly taxi', and so on. Occasionally she expresses an emotion, 'very lonesly' (3 February 1899 while Edward is in London), or 'mis' (miserable, 29 April 1910, when she fails to find Edward and Alice Stuart-Wortley where she expects to find them). But these catchwords mean little more than her few comments on Edward's music, such as 'very brilliant and splendid' (29 September 1898 on *Caractacus*), or her frequent use of 'all well, D.G.', when Edward returns from a journey.

The one clear exception to this reticence is the opening phase of her relationship with him, when she allows the reader to glimpse her state of mind. 'An Admonition against Despondency' begins:

Love the earth a little while,  
For shadows swiftly flee across  
Meadows lit with summer's smile,  
Joy must not faint, all is not lost...

and it ends:

Gifts may come of friendship, love,  
And human service gladness brings;  
Rejoice, the sky is blue above  
And hark! the lark exulting sings.

And when she heard Edward's *Suite for String Orchestra* at the Worcester Musical Union in May 1888 she wrote the enthusiastic poem 'On hearing some orchestral music'.<sup>27</sup> The final stanza runs:

And love and pain  
Now mingle in the strain again,  
While mystically the music swells,  
Floats on and on, and ever tells  
Of joy and love, and yearnings past:  
Or hopes divine and longings vast;  
No instrument could breathe it all  
So subtle, strange, the harmonies that fall.

27 The suite had three movements, 'Spring Song', 'Elegy' and 'Finale', and was probably the basis for the later *Serenade for Strings*. Again I am grateful to Chris Bennett for pointing this out.

In 1888 she also wrote the poem 'Love's Grace':

It chanced one day  
My feet led me a happy way,  
A way most sweet, for so it fell  
That I upon my Love did light  
Which made that joyful road most bright.  
The gladness in me wrought, no words can tell.

O blessed day  
Whose hours drew me along the way,  
For soothely then my Love did smile  
And by Love's favour did I stand  
One instant's time, yes, hand in hand.  
My heart will feast to think of that long while.

'Tis gone the day  
Which set me on such favoured way.  
Enough for me, most thankful slave  
Such joy in that glad hour I seized  
For truth to tell my Love looked kind  
With thankful heart I keep Love's grace in mind.

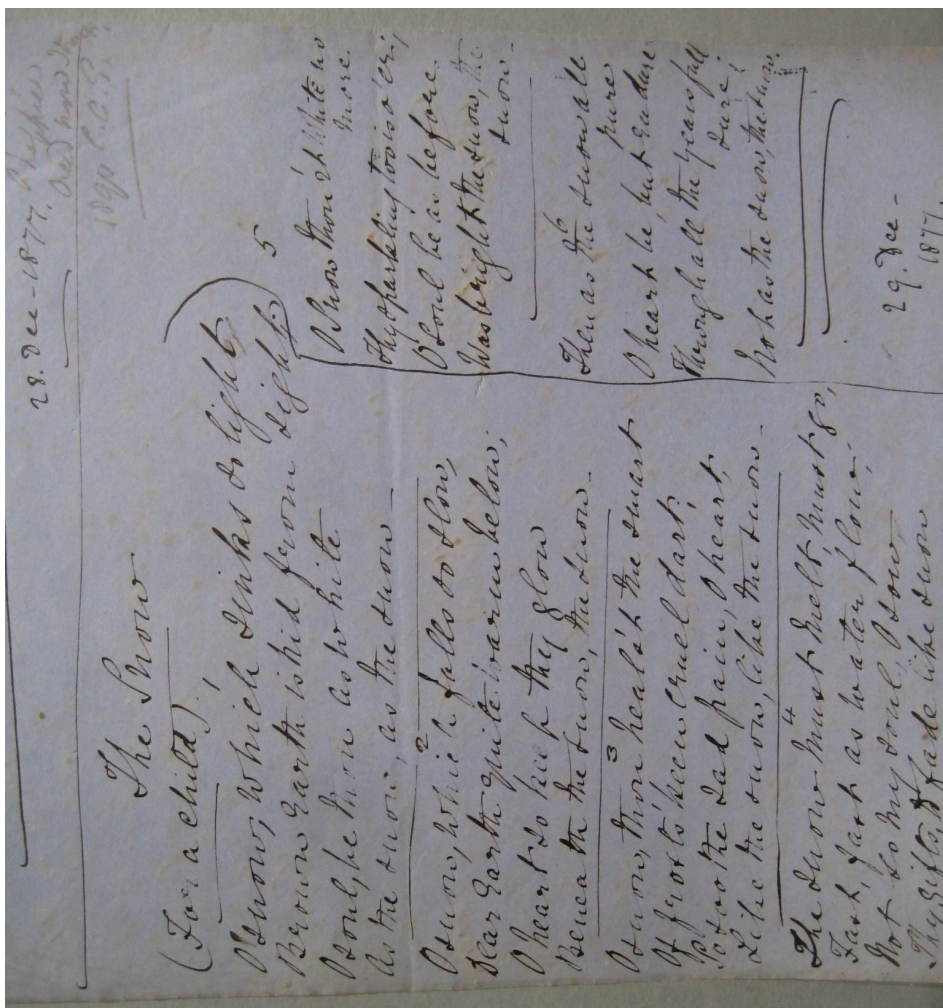
To quote Percy Young again, 'at this time [Edward] composed his complement to 'Love's Grace' in *Liebesgruss*' – which we now know by its supplementary French title, *Salut d'amour*.<sup>28</sup>

Alice responded with another almost Petrarchan sonnet, 'Most dear my own', written on Boxing Day, 1888, the manuscript of which shows corrections in over half the lines: she was plainly trying to offer Edward her best. The final (?) version is as follows:

Most dear my own beloved let us hold  
That day which gave to me so sweet a right  
To say beloved and to thee the might  
To take my life and as thou wilt to mould  
Its course. But so, dear love, thy hand enfold  
Mine own, in clinging grasp, the path is light,  
And so mine eyes meet thine in whose sweet sight  
I read thy heart, the bliss of life is told.  
Then soon again beloved let me feel  
Thy presence thrill through every pulse and know  
The joy of thy dear touch on neck and brow  
And feel again the close pressed kisses seal  
My lips to make them thine for aye. While flow  
Too swift the hours for Love doth speed them now.

When she and Edward married in May 1889, not all members of her family were as bitterly opposed as her mother's sisters, Mrs Caroline Dighton (the fearsome 'Aunt Car') and Aunt Gertrude, Lady Thompson, who had married the army and the navy respectively. Cousin William Raikes, a lawyer of Alice's generation, attended the wedding and signed the register, and he and his

28 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 95.



wife kindly lent their house in Upper Norwood to the newly-weds while Edward tried to establish himself in London. The short poem that Alice wrote to thank them, '10 October, 1889 - - - 18 March, 1890', runs thus:

Fair breaks the Spring o'er copse and mead  
And sunshine steeps the gladsome land in light;  
She willingly our wandering steps would lead  
To fairer scenes, unknown to wintry night.

So let these strains attune your soul, and bring  
Soft floating sounds from restful spheres, afar  
From din of circling hours: they fain would sing  
Of peace, and those high joys no strife may bring.

Like the preceding three poems it may have little original to say, and some of the words will by now be familiar – fair, gladsome, wandering, joys, strife, etc. – but it is again unquestionably cheerful.

Alice was cheerful, and so was Edward: 'what a dear, loving companion I have & how sweet everything seems.'<sup>29</sup> His loving companion hoped that he would set her poems to music, but while he did set about a third of the 40 or so that she wrote after they met, of the 60 or more that she had written earlier, he set just three: 'Fly, Singing Bird', 'The Snow', originally written in 1877 'for a child', and 'The Wind at Dawn', although she offered him many more.

'Fly, Singing Bird' and 'The 'Snow', in an amended form, were both embedded in *Isabel Trevithoe* and had to wait several more years before Edward set them, but it is easy to see why he immediately chose 'The Wind at Dawn' from among the poems on offer in 1888, for it contains original imagery and rich language, and is carried along by a rhythm that could easily be fitted to music. When Boosey & Co. published the score in 1907, *The Morning Post* expressed itself more generously than it had in respect of *Marchcroft Manor*: "The Wind at Dawn"... is a setting of some words of great beauty... there is only one awkward line – that containing the double sibilant "the sea streamed red," the difficulty of which the composer eliminates by repeating the words "the sea"... The music is excellent.'

To turn to the poems Alice wrote after meeting Edward, 'O Happy Eyes' was written in 1888, was set in 1889 and eventually published in a performance version by Novello in 1896. Again, the words are widely available.

And when, in 1889, Andrew Lang at first refused permission for Edward to set 'My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land', Alice stepped in with alternative words under the title 'The Sunny Isles', a phrase she had used in the sonnet 'New Year'. However, Lang presently relented and her efforts were not needed.

29 Letter to Charles Buck, in Percy M. Young (ed.), *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 46.



### The 1890s

Further disappointment followed. The 'Mill Wheel' poems, 'Winter' and 'May (A Rhapsody)', were written and set in 1892, but were never performed in public or published in Alice's lifetime.<sup>30</sup> Edward, never one to waste notes, altered some of Longfellow's lines in *King Olaf* in 1896 so that he 'could fit them to his old unpublished setting of Alice's first 'Mill Wheel' song.'<sup>31</sup>

It is obvious why Edward found 'Winter' suitable for setting:

On and on the water flows  
Stops the mill wheel never,  
Crashing on and on it goes  
Hearts may ache for ever.

Once it sounded joyously  
Hearing it together,  
All the birds sang merrily  
Bees hummed in the heather.

Then we stood and watched the spray  
Watched the rainbow quiver,  
Gone is sunshine, past is May;  
Dreary rushes shiver.

Touch of hand is but a dream,  
All Love's gift is hidden,  
Sweetest eyes no more may gleam  
Sorrow comes unbidden.

The words are pedestrian, but the rhythm suggests the turning of a wheel and lends itself to piano trills. Moreover, the trochaic metre was used by Longfellow, and Longfellow had been Edward's favourite poet since his mother first read verses to him.

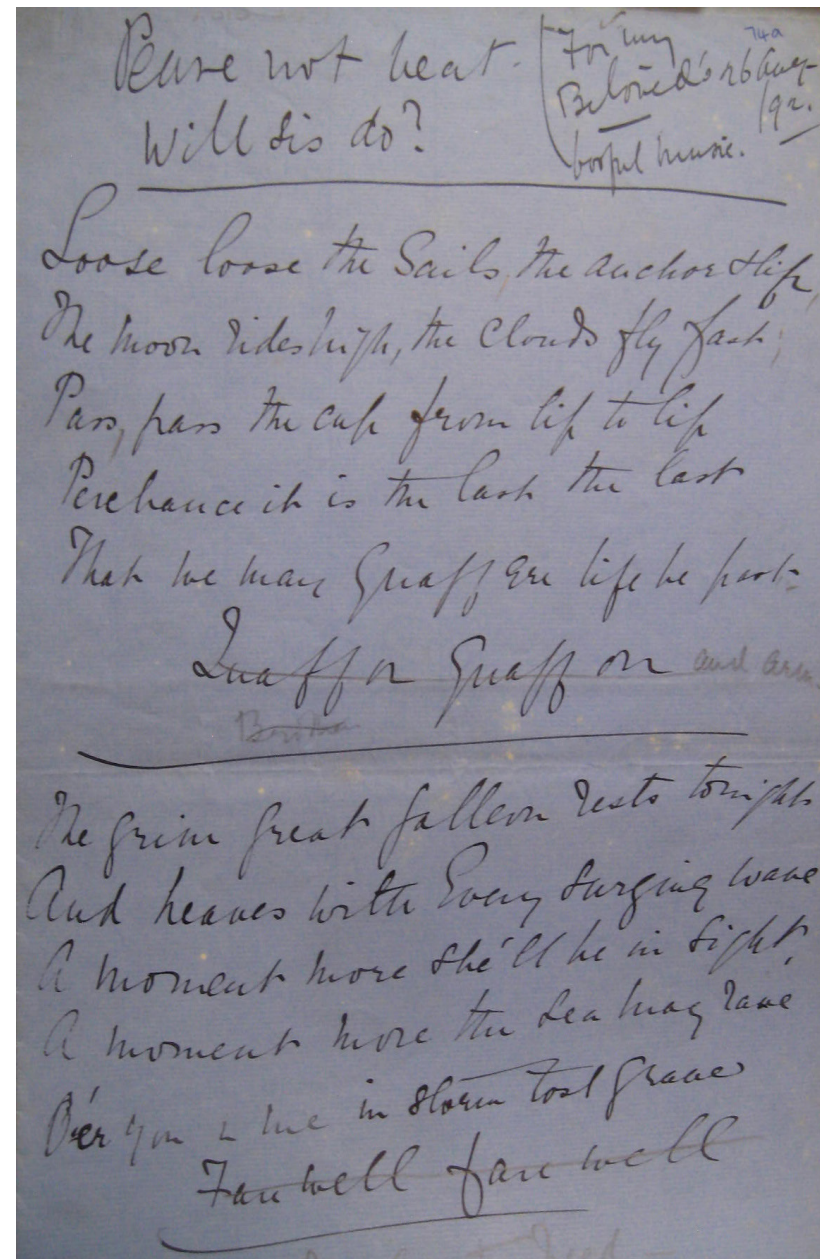
The second poem, 'May', is not Alice's finest work. It begins:

Oh! the rush of the water free  
Oh! the hum of the joyous bee,  
Oh! the singing of birds in May,  
And blue of the sky today...

In 1892 she also offered him the chauvinistic '1588', with the humbling superscription 'For my Beloved's booful music. Pease not beat. Will sis do?' It anticipates the *Sea Pictures*, and may have put that idea in Edward's mind, but it did not 'do', although the language and the driving rhythm are worthy of Tennyson's sailor shooting the harbour-bar. It begins:

30 'Winter' has now been recorded by Somm Recording (SOMMCD 271-2). See the CD review of *The Hills of Dreamland* in ESJ Vol. 21 No. 3, Dec 2018.

31 Jerrold Northrop Moore, p. 205.



1588, with Alice's note to Edward (Peter Sutton)

Loose, loose the sails, the anchor slip,  
 The moon rides high, the clouds fly fast;  
 Pass on the cup from lip to lip  
 Perchance it is the last, the last  
 That we may quaff ere life be past;  
 Quaff on and arm.

The grim, great galleon rests tonight  
 And heaves with every surging wave,  
 A moment more she'll be in sight,  
 A moment more the sea may rave  
 O'er you and me in storm-tost grave;  
 No eye to heed.

But sword in hand we'll board the foe,  
 And shouting loud old England's name  
 We'll storm their deck with thrust and blow,  
 Then welcome death or life the same  
 For dearer far than life is Fame;  
 On, comrades, on!

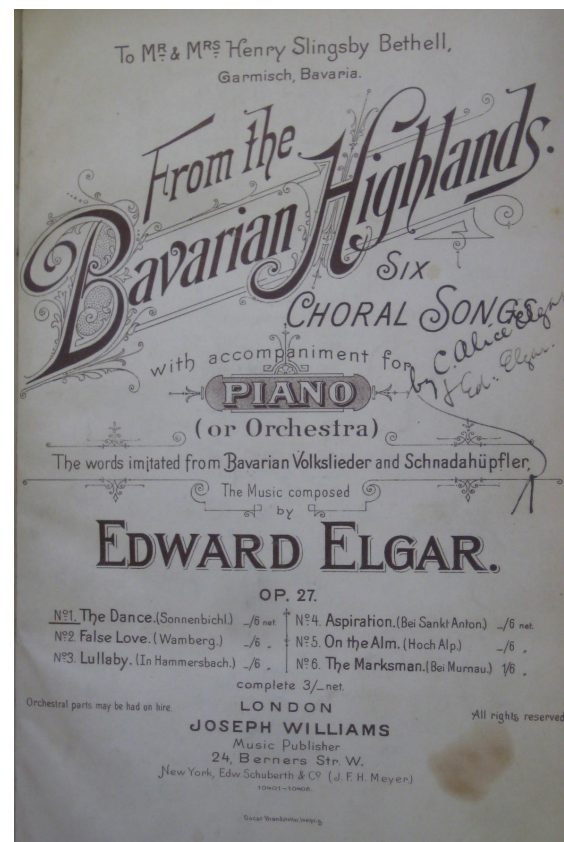
Doubtless feeling disappointed, Alice turned once more to prose, reviving her earlier essay and contrasting 'The Ideal in the Present' with that in the past. In the essay she asks how the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will be characterised by historians of the future, for 'more than in any age of which any intimate knowledge has come down to us, have discoveries and inventions been assimilated in our daily life....' A quotation from Canto XIV of Dante's *Purgatorio* is added in the margin.

She remarks that the Victorian age has also 'seen the birth of two painters of the absolutely ideal', Burne-Jones and Watts, whose studio she had visited with Edward in April 1891. She then turns to novels, praising Shorthouse's *Sir Percival* and *John Inglesant*, which is set, like Symonds' *Hanley Castle*, during the Civil War and, she says, is 'imbued with thought and involving serious problems.' She also mentions *Robert Elsmere* by Mrs Humphry Ward, which deals with the crisis of belief and 'promises to teach a new Gospel, however lamentable a failure.' She concludes her essay with remarks on the originality of Beethoven and his followers, Wagner, Bruch and Brahms.

Poetry was not at an end, however. 'The Snow', shortened and amended again, and 'Fly, Singing Bird' were set in 1894, and the six *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* were written and set the following year, accounting for nearly half of Edward's settings of Alice's work.

Like 'The Snow', the *Bavarian Highlands* were very much a combined effort. In his biography of Alice, Percy Young reproduces the manuscript pages that are in the archive, which reveal that: '[t]he development of the text of the [Bavarian] songs may be traced through various extant drafts that bear marks of frequent revision and annotation by each partner.' Edward was not only being selective in what he set, but was also suggesting improvements to Alice's words and proposing whole stanzas of his own.

The Bavarian project arose out of their shared enthusiasm for German culture and Nordic medieval romanticism. Edward owed much of his initial success to Germans, to Jaeger, Manns, Richter and the Lower Rhine Music Festival, and he had visited Leipzig when Helen Weaver was studying there. In 1892 he set Longfellow's translation of a poem by Ludwig Uhland, *The Black Knight (Der schwarze Ritter)*, and a short while later he composed *King Olaf*, the story of the first Christian king of Norway, which he took from Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. To quote Michael



Alice's own copy of the *Bavarian Highlands*, with her signature (Peter Sutton)

Kennedy, 'Edward was turning to words he had known and liked from youth [i.e. Longfellow] but one wonders, too, if Alice's influence was discernible.'<sup>32</sup> Alice's diary entry for 15 July 1894 reads, 'E. wrote Sagas all day – booful,' *Sagas* being the original working title of *King Olaf*.<sup>33</sup>

Her German was excellent, as we have seen, and she and Edward visited Germany almost every year from 1892 to 1897.<sup>34</sup> In the words of Rosa Burley, 'The German culture was one with which she was clearly in deep sympathy, and I suspected that she felt more at home in Munich than she would have done in many parts of England.'<sup>35</sup>

32 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (London etc.: Oxford University Press, 1968), 32.

33 Jerrold Northrop Moore, p. 179. In December 1894 Edward 'brought home several books of sagas from The Mount, for Miss Burley was eager to help...on 25th January 1895 Edward wrote his name in a volume of Longfellow which contained "The Saga of King Olaf"' (idem, 183).

34 The visits to Germany are described in Alexander Odefey, 'Edward Elgar and Gustav Mahler: (part one)', *ESJ* April 2017 Vol. 20 No. 1 (5-34).

35 Rosa Burley, p. 65.

VI.

THE MARKSMEN.

(BEI MURNAU.)



Come from the mountain side,  
Come from the valleys wide,  
See, how we muster strong,  
Tramping along!

Rifle on shoulder sling,  
Powder and bullets bring,  
Manly in mind and heart,  
Play we our part.

Sure be each eye to-day,  
Steady each hand must stay  
If in the trial we,  
Victors would be!

Sharp is the crack! 'tis done!  
Lost is the chance, or won;  
Right in the gold is it?  
Huzza! the hit!

The sun will sink and light the west  
And touch the peaks with crimson glow;  
Then shadows fill the vale with rest  
While stars look peace on all below.

In triumph then we take our way,  
And with our prizes homeward wend;  
Through meadows sweet with new-mown hay,  
A song exultant will we send.

One of the pictures pasted into Alice's copy of the *Bavarian Highlands* (Peter Sutton)

In this Alice was in tune with the times. German scholarship, poetry and music were held in high regard before the Great War (hence the original title of *Liebesgruss*). Concerts in Worcester and elsewhere regularly included German songs and orchestral works, and German bands toured the country, as did Mendelssohn and other high-brow musicians. There is an excellent recent article by Jeremy Dibble entitled 'The Death of a Culture: Germany and British Music before 1914', which pursues this theme.<sup>36</sup>

After the excitement of the Bavarians came a relapse. Edward did not take up what looks from Alice's notes to have been the idea for an opera entitled *The Coast of Barberry* [sic], nor did he set her 1896 poems 'After' or 'Sighs in Summer', which begins:

Across the trees and hilltops  
The summer breezes sigh,  
They see the shining dewdrops,  
But sleep when night comes nigh.

and ends:

I haste and ask the swallow,  
And ask the honied bee,  
Marked they sweet eyes grown hollow,  
Eyes tear-stained, did they see?

They neither pause nor hearken,  
Nor birds nor winds can dream,  
What cares my heart can darken  
Though summer reign supreme.

Are the cares of time truly darkening her heart again, or is this more fin-de-siècle melancholy that bemoans the indifference of nature while playing with words, complementing 'the honied bee' with 'sweet eyes'? In either case it is unoriginal in vocabulary and imagery, as Edward remarked, unkindly but accurately, on the manuscript: 'If zu smells sis, zu'll find it's not fesh! Grrh!'

However, Alice would have been pleased the following year by his inclusion of 'Love Alone' in his *Sea Pictures* under the title 'In Haven'. As with the *Bavarian Highlands*, however, he did not set the poem as first written, swapping around the first two stanzas and altering

Closely cling, for winds drive fast  
Blossoms perish in the blast

to

Closely cling, for waves beat fast  
Foam-flakes cloud the hurrying blast

while

Joy may go, and sunlit day

became

Joy, sea-swept, may fade today.

36 Jeremy Dibble, 'The Death of a Culture: Germany and British Music before 1914' in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Worcester: Elgar Works, 2nd ed., 2014), 73-87.

It was not just a question of improving the words and changing it from a terrestrial to a maritime poem, but he would also have had in mind what was easy to sing.

The original version appeared the following year in the fourth issue of *The Dome*, the London magazine which had published the score of a piano minuet by Edward in its second issue. The magazine was even shorter-lived than *Home Chimes*, running quarterly and then monthly from 1897 to 1900 but dealing in greater depth with literature, the visual arts, music and theatre.<sup>37</sup> And once more, Alice was among artists of renown: illustrations, in the style of Beardsley, by the burgeoning theatre designer Edward Gordon Craig, and contributions from Laurence Binyon, A.E. Housman, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and W.B. Yeats.

Alice also turned to translation. In 1896 she had translated a German short story, *Ritter Gluck*, by E.T.A. Hoffmann, and this was published in *London Society, A Monthly Magazine*. Then in 1898 she translated a poem by Ludwig Uhland which she initially entitled 'The Dying Warriors', later correcting this to 'The Dying Heroes'. Her version begins:

The Danish swords press hard, the Swedes at last  
Flee seawards fast;  
The cars crash thundering by, the steel gleams bright  
In moonlight white:  
Then dying, on a corpse-strewn plain they lay;  
The comely Sven, and Ulf, the hero grey.  
Sven  
The Norn, my Sire, deems me to die so soon,  
In youth's high noon;  
My Mother never more may smooth my fair  
And flowing hair;  
The maid I love will gaze and gaze again  
From turret high with anguished eyes in vain.  
Ulf  
They'll, mourn, and us in dreams at night behold,  
In dread untold.  
But comfort thee; soon breaks the bitter pain  
Her heart in twain,  
And smiling, crowned with golden locks, thy love  
Hands thee the cup of Odin's feast above.

Sven and Ulf then take it in turns to bewail their passing and to promise each other solace in Valhalla.

The change of title is odd since Uhland clearly uses the word 'Helden', heroes, not 'Krieger', warriors, but it is nonetheless a competent translation which conveys the meaning and the range of imagery, and even preserves the metre of the original:

Der Dänen Schwerter drängen Schwedens Heer  
Zum wilden Meer...

And in 1900, at around the time she translated a sonnet from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, she turned another poem entitled 'The Violin' from Italian into English:

<sup>37</sup> *The Dome* was published by the Unicorn Press and subtitled consecutively 'A Quarterly Containing Examples of All the Arts' and 'An Illustrated Monthly Magazine and Review'.

Ah me! how many times I've longed for love  
Of lover, who could music sweetly play:  
Now, angel-sent, he cometh from above.  
Such gracious favour wins my thanks to-day.

The mill will silent be for lack of grain,  
Then bring my love his violin again.

Ah me! how many times I've longed for love  
Of lover, who could music sweetly play:  
Now, angel-sent, he cometh from above.  
Such gracious favour wins my thanks to-day.

Bravo! Bravos be thine.  
Oh! what a player's mine!

Once again she keeps as closely as possible to the original, noting the first line of the Italian on the manuscript: 'Oh! quante volte l'ho desiderato...'.<sup>38</sup>

### *Alice's last poems*

In 1901 Alice composed two sad poems, 'Love in Absence' and 'Reconciliation'. The former reads:

When shall I see the gladdening smile which lies  
On thy too pensive brow while joys arise  
In hurrying tumult in our souls? Lo! then,  
All wondered at the grace Love gives, dear friend,  
I kiss away the sadness from thine eyes.  
And scarcely caring more for future years  
With that one gladness locked within my heart  
The world may take its way.

And the latter, which Percy Young calls 'a poignant sea picture', composed while Edward was in Bradford for a performance of the five published *Sea Pictures*, contains the words:<sup>38</sup>

Come back, the sea lies still,  
Rests, and forgets its pain,  
Winds scarcely fan the hill  
The pines may sleep again.  
Come back to me, my love at last,  
Peace follows storm, forget the angered past.

At some point she also wrote three more sonnets, 'Longing in absence', 'Absence: Longing again', and 'Love would give itself', and two further collections of sonnets. And in 1904, in her mid-fifties, she sent off an anthology of a score of poems to an unidentified publisher, but in vain. They included the Dante translation and Uhland's 'Dying Warriors', 'The Sunny Isles', 'The Fight for the Shrine', 'Love and Death', 'To emulate Marcus Aurelius', 'Sighs in Summer', 'Ways to the Mount' and 'Renunciation' – the poems that she considered to be her best unpublished work.

<sup>38</sup> Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 144.

Also included was a new poem demonstrating that her originality was not entirely lost. In 'Something Afar' the stream does not merely rush, it is beckoned, and the second stanza shifts the imagery in an unexpected direction. Perhaps she hoped that it might appeal once again to Edward's affection for the musicality of the sea:

Swiftly rushes the stream through the meadowland  
Ever hastening to follow a beckoning hand,  
Hurried by a voice calling in haste;  
'Travel on to the sea, ripple onwards and taste  
The new life it will give thee, enraptured and free;  
Travel on, splash and sparkle, on, on to the sea.'

They are calling me ever, the hand and the voice,  
And they bid me to follow and haste and rejoice,  
They tell me the spirit I love and would reach,  
Though so distant I scarcely may woo her to speech.  
Scarcely gather a gleam of her garments of white  
Or a glance from her eyes with their radiant light,  
Yet they tell me she waits, and is waiting alway,  
And I sail the high seas and will seek her for aye.

In addition, the collection contained this untitled poem quoted in John Bridcut's film *Elgar: The Man behind the Mask* and reproduced in Kevin Allen's 2011 article in the *ESJ*. It had been in the archive all the time and easily accessible to researchers:<sup>39</sup>

Thy love doth fade, too like a winter sun;  
I watch it grow as cold;  
The summer joy is done,  
Although its radiant hours seem scarce begun,  
Dark night must it enfold.

Deceive anew and smile as if no part  
Were thine in my lost life;  
Leave me my wasted heart  
And buy new joys from out the world's gay mart;  
Leave me my bitter strife.

Is it really a reflection on Edward's dalliance with Pippa Worthington or Alice Stuart-Wortley or some other dark lady, or yet another example of pretended sensibility? And would she have included it in a public offering if it were intensely personal?

Whatever the truth of the matter, Alice was discouraged by Edward's disinclination to set more of her work and by publishers' continuing rejections, and her output fell.

Her final few poems are 'A Christmas Greeting', 'The King's Way', '4 August 1914', and 'Compensation'. Edward set the first two, and the third was published, probably because its author was the wife of a celebrity.

It is evident from the annotations on the manuscript that 'A Christmas Greeting', featuring

39 Kevin Allen, 'A Letter and a Poem Unmasked: Two Documents from John Bridcut's film *Elgar: The Man behind the Mask*' (*ESJ*, April 2011), 18-21.

the *pifferari* (itinerant musicians, literally 'pipers'), was composed with Edward's help. It is an elegant conceit pairing the Tiber with the Wye, and was written and set in Italy, where the Elgars were wintering for the sake of Edward's health. It was sent back to Sinclair for performance by the Hereford Cathedral choristers at their 1907 Christmas concert, and the almost final version reads:

Bowered on sloping hillsides rise  
In sunny glow, the purpling vine;  
Beneath the greyer English skies,  
In fair array, the red-gold apples shine.

*Refrain:*

To you in snow,  
To us in sun,  
Love is but one;  
Hearts beat and glow  
By oak or vine.  
Friends for always mine.

On and on old Tiber speeds,  
Dark with its weight of ancient crime:  
Far north, through green and quiet meads,  
Flows on the Wye midst mists and silvering rime.

The pifferari come from far,  
They seek the shrines, and hymn the peace  
Which herald angels, 'neath the star  
Foretold to shepherds, bidding strife to cease.

Our England sleeps in shroud of snow,  
Bells, sadly sweet, recall life's flight  
And tears, unbid, are wont to flow  
As 'Noel, Noel' sounds across the night.

Before it was performed, Edward made a few final adjustments to remove remaining tongue-twisters:

'Friends for always mine' became 'Friends, in storm or calm';  
'midst mists and silvering rime' became 'in mist and silv'ring rime';  
'come from far' became 'wander far', and  
'recall life's flight' became 'knell life's swift flight'.

'The King's Way' is an occasional piece written by Alice in 1909 for the opening of Kingsway, recently cut through from Holborn to the Aldwych in London, and performed at a Grand Patriotic Concert in the Royal Albert Hall by Clara Butt with the New Symphony Orchestra under Frederic Cowen. It reflects the growing fear of German naval power, and it seeks uncomfortably to liken a rather dull street to the English Channel:

The newest street in London town,  
The Kingsway, the Kingsway!  
The newest street in London town,  
Who'll pace it up and pace it down?

The answer is:

The brave, the strong, who strive and try,  
And think and work, who fight and die  
To make their England's royal way  
The King's Way, the King's Way!

There follow three more bracing stanzas, which end with words contributed by Edward, possibly against his better judgment:

England's sons across the sea;  
They too will fight to keep it free:  
Let ev'ry voice in England say, –  
'God keep the way by night and day,  
The King of England's Way!'  
The King's Way, the King's Way!

'4 August 1914' is a similarly bellicose sonnet that Percy Young calls 'a piece of terrifying banality'.<sup>40</sup> It appeared in *The Bookman* and accorded with the public mood at the outbreak of war. While Edward agonised, Alice's enthusiasm for German culture appears to have evaporated totally. The 'he' in the closing sestet refers to 'the foe':

'Old England sleeps, he said, and dreams of gain,  
She will not stir, who once was battle's lord,  
Or risk the clash of squadron on the main;  
Her treaties may be torn while 'gainst the horde  
These lesser folk may plead for help in vain.'  
But throned amidst the seas, She bared her sword.

Alice's very last poem, 'Compensation', which remained unpublished, was written in 1915 and viciously attacks American wartime neutrality. It begins:

Pay, pay, pay  
Only pay enough and then  
We glance aside, we Yankee men  
And feasting, drown the accusing thought  
That peace so meanly can be bought...

### Conclusion

The 1890s were the high point of Alice's career as a poet, thanks to Edward's settings, but her love of poetry also contributed to his career by inducing him to set work by other writers. As a child he had been read to by his mother and had enjoyed access to 'theological books...Elizabethan dramatists...chronicles including Baker's and Holinshed's, besides a tolerable collection of old poets and translations of Voltaire, and all sorts of things up to the eighteenth century...' including Michael Drayton and Sir Philip Sidney.<sup>41</sup> However, before he met Alice, most of Edward's vocal

40 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 177.

41 Jerrold Northrop Moore, p. 56, indirectly quoting Elgar describing books left in the attic by a bookseller.

writing had been arrangements of liturgical texts and he had set the work of just four secular poets: C. Flavell Hayward, John Hay, Charles Duc d'Orléans, and Richard Barham, author of the *Ingoldsby Legends*. After he married Alice, he set many more.

She would have been proud of that, but did she sacrifice her own career? She certainly expended much of her energy coping with Edward's moods, his bouts of ill health and his restless travels, not to mention taking primary responsibility for Carice and maintaining a hectic social round. It is therefore remarkable that she wrote as much as she did during the first ten years of her marriage. But she did not sacrifice her career, for despite her best efforts, she did not truly have one.

Why was that?

An early twentieth-century book for novices entitled *How to Write and What to Read* says, sensibly enough, that 'a well-chosen adjective will help you. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* was "long and lank and brown, as is the ribbed sea-sand." Does not the adjective "ribbed" help you to see the sand on the sea-shore...?'<sup>42</sup>

Alice does use some striking images – 'love the earth a little while', the sea 'rests and forgets its pain', the New Year and the Old 'have clasped each other's hands', for example – but she also resorts to stock epithets, and she cannot rival the originality of the dove-cote doors of sleep, the soul bursting her fetters, or the roar of the withdrawing tide of faith.

Rather, 'the vaulted sky is blue' ('Autumn') is not just unoriginal but imprecise, and the sky is blue again in 'An Admonition against Despondency' and in 'The Mill Wheel'. In fact, she frequently repeats the same restricted vocabulary: 'Around the gentle breezes sweep' ('Autumn'); 'The rippling river onward sweeps' ('Miserrimus'); 'And the storm riven clouds onwards sweep' ('On a Castle in Northern Ireland'). 'Glad', 'gladness', 'gladsome' and 'gladdening' crop up more than half a dozen times between them in the lines quoted in this article, as do 'sleep' and 'smile' or 'smiling', while 'sigh' occurs a dozen times and 'joy' or 'joyous' on over twenty occasions. It is difficult to argue with Percy Young's assessment that 'Alice's talent was reflective rather than creatively original.'<sup>43</sup>

The 'Castle in Northern Ireland' even repeats an end rhyme within the same poem, compounding the error by using the same word: 'Oh the breakers they clash and they moan,' 'And I mock at the weary wind's moan.' This is one of many 'usages deserving censure', according to R.F. Brewer, and he goes on to condemn 'the introduction of words merely for the sake of rhyme.'<sup>44</sup> This could be said to apply to Alice's 'Who'll pace it up and pace it down' ('The King's Way'), 'Watched the rainbow quiver' ('Renunciation' – does a rainbow quiver?) or 'but no / where slow' ('Destiny'). The introduction of words for the sake of rhythm is equally inelegant: 'a way most sweet' ('Love's Grace') or 'But yet, at last' ('Thought').

Furthermore, Alice almost invariably keeps to the strict metre of her chosen form whereas, as one modern commentator puts it, 'without...deviations, verse [will] sound mechanical, dull, childish...'<sup>45</sup>

But what about this, 'The Choice', by Katharine Tynan, an Irish writer born in 1859 and a friend of Gerard Manley Hopkins and W.B. Yeats? Robert Lynd selected it for inclusion in his anthology mentioned earlier:

42 Richard Ferrar Patterson & W. Kersley Holmes, *How to Write and What to Read* (London: Gresham Publishing Co., n.d. [1920s]), 248-249.

43 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar*, 145.

44 R.F. Brewer, pp. 164, 168, 169.

45 Michael Ferber, *The Cambridge Introduction to British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226.



Means of carriage past and present: Elgar's photograph of Alice with the American composer John Alden Carpenter and his wife sitting in a hired carriage during their holiday in Rome (January 1907, top; Alice is on the left). And May Grafton's snapshot taken at Plas Gwyn: Professor Sanford arriving for a visit in his hired automobile; Elgar and Alice greet him on the steps (1906). (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

When skies are blue and days are bright,  
A kitchen garden's my delight,  
Set round with rows of decent box  
And blowsy girls of hollyhocks.

There are another eight stanzas, concluding:

Take roses red and lilies white,  
A kitchen garden's my delight;  
Its gillyflowers and phlox and cloves,  
And its tall cote of irised doves.

Is Alice's work, with its blue skies and golden corn, any less deserving than Tynan's? At her best, Alice's reflections on the mystery of life deserve attention and respect, and her vocabulary, some of the time, is no poorer than that of her contemporaries, some of the time. Moreover, even the most illustrious versifiers can falter:

Now winds of winter glue  
Their tears upon the thorn,  
And earth has voices few,  
And those forlorn.

That is the opening of the poem 'Upon New Year's Eve' by the great Q himself, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Winter glue? Moreover, he includes O'Shaughnessy's *Music-Makers* ode with its probably ironic but nonetheless awkward 'deathless ditties' in his *Oxford Book of English Verse*, as a model worth emulating.

Such models would not remain in vogue much longer. Within a year of Alice's death in 1920, there appeared not only the backward-looking *Anthology of Modern Verse* which includes Tynan's kitchen garden but also a collection of T.S. Eliot's poems that looks forward and includes 'Gerontion' – no connection, probably. Eliot's poem begins:

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.  
I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought.

There is a nod in the direction of rhyme, but after Eliot, metre is flexible, and thee and thou, woe and ire, midst and 'mongst, are dead.

Peter Sutton has written previous articles for the *ESJ* on 'Elgar's Religious Beliefs' (Dec 2013) and 'Piers Plowman – Elgar's Bible' (2017). His modern verse translation of *Piers Plowman* was published by McFarland in 2014, and his play *Elgar and Alice* was first performed in 2007. Poems of Armenian War and Peace, co-written with Liana Hayrapetyan, was published this year by the Tekeyan Trust, and other poems have appeared in journals. He has spoken on Elgarian and other topics at conferences and festivals, and is a former Head of Publications at the Unesco Institute for Education. For more see [www.petersutton.eu](http://www.petersutton.eu)

## A. J. Jaeger's copy of 'Enigma' recovered

### Julian Rushton

When in 2018 an item connected to Elgar's *Variations for Orchestra* ('Enigma'), Op. 36, was presented to an expert on BBC TV's Antiques Roadshow, the six-figure valuation created a sensation sufficient to attract the national press. As so often, however, descriptions of the item were misleading. *The Times*, for instance, described it as 'a unique draft score of the *Enigma Variations*'; it is no such thing.<sup>1</sup> When the circumstances of the discovery became clear (including the fact that it was property legitimately taken from the Elgar Birthplace but, illicitly, not returned), a British Library source apparently described it as 'a unique hybrid of printed score, annotations and pasted-in passages'.<sup>2</sup> This is nearer the truth, but was only a provisional comment, and does not really reflect the facts.

The bulkiest element is quite simply a copy of the printed full score, published by Novello in 1899, and the property of 'Nimrod': Novello's editor and Elgar's friend, August Johannes Jaeger. For reasons that are probably lost to us, a number of autograph drafts and sketches related to the work are interleaved close to the variations they concern. The printed and manuscript elements do not otherwise interact; there is no hybridization. Not only is the item not a 'draft score', but the manuscript pages could have been kept elsewhere without affecting the score, or the score affecting them.

I do not intend to revisit the history that led to the item appearing on the Antiques Roadshow, or its recovery thanks to the good sense of Christie's, who contacted the legitimate owners. Happily, it has come to the British Library, as has much other 'Birthplace' material no longer at 'The Firs'.<sup>3</sup> The BL now correctly describes it as 'A J. Jaeger's copy of "Variations for Orchestra" by Edward Elgar, printed by Novello & Co in 1899 with MSS sketches interleaved'. No sensation, then; for this is much as it was listed in Novello's 'Complete Edition' score of 1986.<sup>4</sup> Before the item was taken from the Birthplace, it was available to scholars. It duly appears in Christopher Kent's 'Guide to Research', although Kent's revised edition does not note that it was then no longer in situ at Broadheath.<sup>5</sup>

1 David Anderson, 'Elgar custodians vow to even the score', *The Times*, 10 July 2018.

2 *Idem*, *The Times*, 17 July 2018.

3 I am grateful to Christopher Scobie, Curator of Music Manuscripts, British Library, for allowing me to examine the item (MS Dep. 2018/13) in March 2019.

4 Elgar, *Variations on an Original Theme* ('Enigma'), Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 27, edited by Robert Anderson and Jerrold Northrop Moore (London: Novello, 1986); see also Robert Anderson, *Elgar in Manuscript* (London: British Library, 1990), p. 194.

5 Christopher Kent, *Edward Elgar: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 161–2; *Edward Elgar: A Thematic Catalogue and Research Guide* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2013).

A few more facts. The printed full score is the definitive version (including the revised ending to the finale, E.D.U.); hence it contains no information not previously available. 'Draft', like 'sketch', usually implies something written prior to finishing the composition, and the first reports led me to wonder if it might be a corrected proof; but the pages of printed music are devoid of any handwritten corrections or comments. The special interest of the item lies in the leaves of autograph material that were tipped in. Other sketches for the Variations have long been in the British Library, and have been reported on elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

The item was taken to the British Library in 1994, for expert attention to its preservation; this was after it had been seen by the Complete Edition editors and Christopher Kent. The conditions are laid out in a typed BL memorandum of 4 March from Hugh Cobbe (Music Librarian) to Tony Parker (MSS. Conservation Studio), copied to Arthur Searle, confirming that the Elgar Foundation, through the late Wulstan Atkins, was content for the work to go ahead.<sup>7</sup> From this memorandum, it appears that some pages had become stuck together, and that earlier attempts to separate them (apparently without professional involvement) had led to tearing. This can only apply to the tipped-in MSS leaves, and not to the printed score. The latter does, however, have two items that were glued in after the conservation work had been carried out:

- (1) A formal handwritten message from Wulstan Atkins, addressed to the Birthplace. It enjoins the archivist to be careful to keep the additional inserted blank leaves in the right places, surrounding the MS leaves, as they are special paper and form part of the preservation treatment, intended to de-acidify Elgar's manuscript paper.<sup>8</sup>
- (2) A typed account on two pages reporting on the restoration, mostly technical. It states that Wulstan Atkins, Hugh Cobbe, and the late Professor Brian Trowell were present during some stage of the preservation treatment, and gives a full account of the chemical and other interventions that were deemed necessary. The document is signed off (names all typed) '16 June 1994 A. E. Parker, Senior Conservation Officer, cc. A Searle, H. Cobbe, R. Russell, file'.

In addition, the score has a pasted-on MS title-page as well as the printed title-page. On the latter, Jaeger's address is written in faint pencil.

Other scholars may come to different conclusions, particularly if the item is juxtaposed, as is now possible, with other sketches for the same passages. However, the tipped-in sketches relate to only a few of the variations; there is nothing relating to Variations 1 (C.A.E.), 3 (R.B.T.), 4 (W.M.B.), 6 (Ysobel), 7 (Troyte), 8 (W.N.; but see below), 10 (Intermezzo: Dorabella), 11 (G.R.S.), and 13 (\*\*\*). So nothing hints at the disputed identity of (\*\*\*), and nothing bears on the 'enigma' – unless, that is, something can be deduced from additional information on Elgar's indecision

6 The fullest account of the sketches and variants between the autograph and printed score is to be found in the Elgar Complete Edition score. See also my short book: *Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp 14–15 and 59. I could not consult the item discussed here; when I wrote the book (1997–8), it was in limbo.

7 My thanks to Hugh Cobbe for showing me this document. It asks about cost, and whether the close relationship of the sketches to material already in the BL might permit waiving of the fee; a handwritten '£450' appears at the foot of the page.

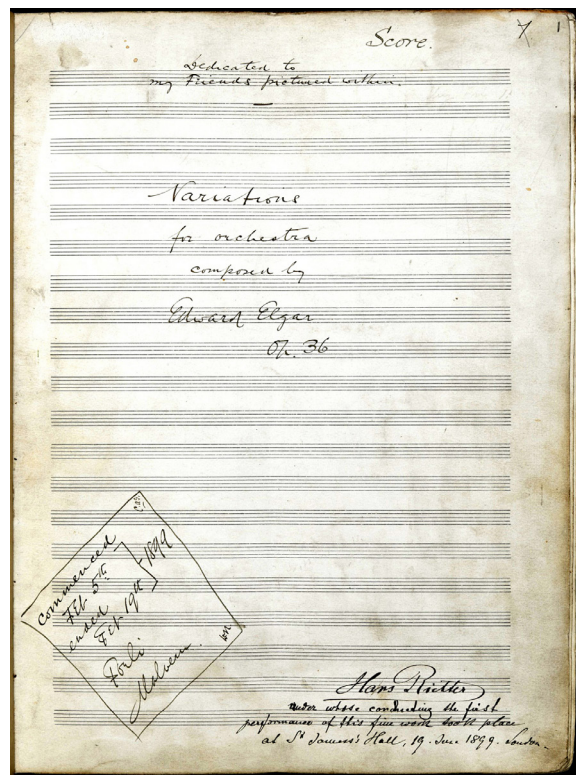
8 It is no part of my brief to assign blame for the failure of the item to reach the Birthplace, to which it should have been returned in 1994.



about the order of the variations, and metronome markings that differ from the published score (see below).

Despite the reporting of the item in the years preceding restoration in 1994, there remain anomalies. Kent lists sketches tipped into the Jaeger score (EB ref. 1145) thus: H.D.SP, W.N., Nimrod, B.G.N. In 2019, however, I saw nothing connected to W.N., and Kent's list does not include the finale (E.D.U.). In addition, with a different call number (EB ref. 674d), Kent lists the theme and R.P.A., sketches of which *are* now tipped into the Jaeger score. Presumably he inspected the material before the editors of the Complete Edition did so (his thesis on Elgar sketches was approved in 1978).<sup>9</sup> The 1986 list corresponds to what is there now. Presumably in the meantime the Birthplace archivist had conflated the materials, although this leaves the W.N. sketch, mentioned by Kent, unaccounted for.

My first impression is that the autograph material is of two different types: composition sketches, supplementing those already in the British Library, mostly written on two staves but far from complete representations of the musical material; and drafts that probably preceded orchestration but are otherwise virtually complete, and which formed the basis of the version for solo piano, also published by Novello.



Elgar's autograph score of Opus 36 (British Library)

9 Christopher Kent, *Edward Elgar: A Composer at Work. A study of his creative processes through his sketches and proof corrections*, PhD, King's College London, 1978.

**The theme.** A note from Elgar to Jaeger reads 'to A.J.J. to be kritikised please'.<sup>10</sup> This MS is not a composition sketch, but is the piano version, before orchestration (as implied by the Complete Edition).

**Variation 2** (H.D.S-P): the metronome mark is dotted crotchet = 84; the published mark is 72. This is a composition sketch, using shorthand, such as 'repeat these bars'. Much of it is in ink (so it may not be the first notation of this variation). Some details are sketched in pencil. Much of the variation consists of repeated two-bar units, handed from first to second violins, so bars 6–7 are to be repeated as 8–9 (in the event, one violin note is different). Elgar decided to bring in wind instruments in bar 8, and their parts are sketched in pencil on an extra staff beneath bar 6.

**Variation 5** (R.P.A.): the metronome mark is dotted crotchet = 58; the published mark is 63 (but the slower marking appears on another sketch already in the BL). Ordering the variations being still undetermined, 'XI' is crossed out and 'V' entered instead (in blue crayon). At the top, however, is written 'follow Troyte'. The thread of the variation is incomplete, with gaps and much pencil sketching.

**Variation 9** (Nimrod): the metronome mark is crotchet = 72, much faster than the published 52 (and faster than the autograph's 66). This composition sketch is not a complete draft; 'repeat' and 'D.C.' are used as shorthand. It starts boldly in ink, with some pencil crossings out. In bar 2 the harmony was modified (the second bass note was originally A flat, not B flat; the middle-register A flat had to be raised to B flat; Elgar avoided consecutive octaves by the second violins' part-crossing pattern, of which there is no trace in this sketch). A falling motive, related to the theme, in parallel thirds over a B flat pedal, does not occur in this form in the variation; it was more imaginatively presented in a lower register (with the pedal made intermittent: bars 20–23).



**Variation 12** (B.G.N.): the metronome mark is crotchet = 50; the published mark is 58. At the top, 'V' and 'IV' are crossed out in blue and replaced by '12'; but at the end of the sketch, in pencil, is written 'W.N. next'. The whole sketch is crossed out (presumably after it was entered into the score or 'Koppid'). The first two bars are in ink, as is the whole of the melody, but bar 9 began with a group of four equal quavers, rather than triplets; the final version is sketched in pencil. In bars 12–15 the melody (violas, cellos) and the woodwind counterpoint are in ink; bars 16–22, only the cello melody is in ink. In bars 23–4 the bass and chords are also in ink, but at bar 24, where the published score has an accent, *sf*, and diminuendo, the sketch has only *p* (presumably Elgar's first thought was *piano subito*). The coda is all in ink, with pencil clarifications of detail.

10 Anderson (*Elgar in Manuscript* p. 91) states that this was sent to Jaeger at the end of October 1898, perhaps with the letter of 24 October with its cryptic opening: 'Here is the "grecian ghost ...".' Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 95.

**Finale** (14: E.D.U.): the metronome mark was originally  $\text{minim} = 92$ , but revised to 84, as in the published version. This is the largest tipped in MS; its six leaves comprise the whole finale, but with the original, shorter ending, laid out for piano, possibly before orchestration. Additional sketches for Elgar's expansion of the finale (at Jaeger's behest) were already in the BL. The music is otherwise essentially complete, but revisions of chords in red ink and a short paste-over show Elgar simplifying the texture without changing the musical substance, no doubt to assist playability. Minor details differ from the published versions: before fig. 65 the full score's 'poco più tranquillo' appears as 'poco meno mosso'. The published piano version has both directions except that it omits 'poco'. At fig. 71 the 'largamente' in both published versions is missing. The homecoming call from 'C.A.E.' (finale from fig. 73) is on a third staff and marked 'small', as it appears in the published piano version. This seems to be the printer's copy (as the editors of complete edition suggest), perhaps returned to Jaeger for proofing.

To summarise: this item, now housed where it belongs, is fascinating, but it adds little to our knowledge of Elgar's work or of his working methods. A full study of the sketches, noting every variant detail, would make an interesting project, but would not affect the definitive musical text. As for the sequence of variations, that R.P.A. might follow 'Troyte' was already known from one of Elgar's lists of possible orderings, but none of these puts W.N. after B.G.N. The altered metronome marks are close to those Elgar eventually settled on, except for Variation 9, which many conductors, Elgar included, have played still more slowly. It is at least clear that at this early stage Elgar did not intend the music to be a funeral anthem. One pleasant outcome of the re-surfacing of this item is a further connection to the variation's inspiration, the then very much alive 'Nimrod'.

*Julian Rushton is a retired professor of music (University of Leeds). His research publications are mainly critical or analytical essays and editions of music from the later 18th to the early 20th century. He published widely about Elgar, e. g. in 1999 an analysis of Elgar's Enigma Variations (Cambridge Music Handbooks). He was the editor of the 'Elgar Society Journal' from 2006 to 2010.*

## An Englishman in Paris

### Martin Bird

*2019 marks the centenary of the commencement of commercial international air services from the United Kingdom, and half a century since the author commenced gainful employment<sup>1</sup> with BOAC; joining his father, who had worked for the airline since leaving the RAF in 1946. I cannot let these milestones pass without contributing an article on Elgar's flight to Paris in 1933.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### *First, a little history ...<sup>2</sup>*

In January 1919 Winston Churchill was appointed Secretary of State for Air, and on 12 February the Department of Civil Aviation was established at the Air Ministry. On 25 August the world's first scheduled international service was inaugurated by Aircraft Transport and Travel between Hounslow Aerodrome<sup>3</sup> and Paris Le Bourget, using single-engined DH-4 bombers converted to carry two passengers. The airlines was joined on 2 September by Handley Page Transport Ltd, which operated Paris flights from Cricklewood Aerodrome, to the north of London, using converted Handley Page twin-engined bombers,<sup>4</sup> and was joined by a third company, the Instone Airline, also operating from Hounslow to Paris. In 1920 Hounslow was closed, and Croydon became the main airport for London.

British airlines received no Government subsidy, and so could not compete against their heavily subsidised continental counterparts. As a result all British airlines ceased operations in February 1921, to be restarted the following month following the granting of temporary subsidies. With a number of British airlines competing on the Paris route – they had been joined in 1922 by the Daimler Airway – in 1923 a Civil Air Transport Subsidies Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Hambling 'to consider the present working of cross-channel subsidies

1 I can hardly call it work – after all, BOAC was a nationalised industry. 'How many people work here?', asked my young daughter at my father's retirement gathering. 'About half of them', replied a passing Director.

2 Adapted from Martin Bird, *An Economic History of Imperial Airways' European Routes* (Thesis: University of Kent at Canterbury, 1968).

3 At Hounslow Heath, about two miles to the south-east of Heathrow Airport, which did not come into operation until after the Second World War.

4 Initially flights had to call at Hounslow Heath for customs clearance.

CONTINENTAL DEPARTURES					
MACHINES	PASSENGER OR GOODS	PASSENGERS NAMES	TO	DUE TO LEAVE	LEFT
HANDLEY PAGE	Goods	Nil	BRUSSELS	12-0	1150
AIR CO	BOTH	2	PARIS	12-30	
BREGUET	BOTH	1	PARIS	12-0	1210
INSTONE & CO	Goods		PARIS		1225

The Departures Board at Hounslow Aerodrome, 13 October 1919.  
(The Central News Ltd.)

and to advise on the best method of subsidising air transport in the future'. As a result of its recommendations, Imperial Airways was incorporated on 31 March 1924 as the 'chosen instrument' of the British government to develop commercial air transport, taking over the operations of the competing British companies. The company continued in this role until its merger with British Airways Ltd.<sup>5</sup> early in the Second World War to form the British Overseas Airways Corporation<sup>6</sup> – BOAC – whose first Chairman was none other than Sir John Reith, who, as Chairman of the BBC, had commissioned Elgar's Third Symphony.

It would be fair to say that from the beginning the Government was happy to throw money at Imperial Airways to enable it to develop long distance routes to connect the United Kingdom with its Empire; but as far as European routes were concerned, Imperial received a fixed amount which was not increased as services expanded. Thus it was incumbent upon the airline to develop its European operations on lines that we would readily recognise today, with the emphasis on safety, customer service, and economic viability.

The safety issue was quickly dealt with by the phasing out of all single-engined aircraft and their replacement by new fleets of three- and four-engined machines.<sup>7</sup> Stewards had been employed intermittently as early as 1922, but in 1927 customer service rose to new heights with the introduction of the 'Silver Wing' service on the Paris route: a four-course luncheon was served in addition to the provision of a bar.<sup>8</sup> The flight, even in the 1930s, took two hours, in part due to the need to sacrifice speed for economics; and the vivid contrast between the lumbering, but

- 5 Which operated out of Heston Aerodrome, about three miles to the north-east of Heathrow .
- 6 The British Overseas Airways Act received Royal Assent on 4 August 1939; BOAC was established on 24 November; and formal operations commenced on 1 April 1940.
- 7 Accidents still happened in these pioneering days, and I can recall in particular two accident reports: one where a passenger went for a furtive smoke in the toilet, managed to set fire to the wood and fabric structure, and left the aircraft through the resultant hole in the floor, still sitting on the toilet; and the second during early trials of landing lights for night-time operation, when phosphorus flares were used, and the aircraft just managed to land before the fabric on the lower wings burnt away.
- 8 Though it is clear from the Imperial Airways items preserved by Dick Mountford that their flights were not Silver Wing services, and that the airline had set a precedent eagerly followed by the budget airlines of today in charging for food and drink.



Imperial Airways HP-45 'Heracles' G-AAXD and KLM DC-2 on the tarmac at Croydon.

economic, Handley Page HP-45 aircraft of Imperial Airways and the swift, streamlined, but more costly to operate foreign fleets can be seen in the photograph taken at Croydon of the 38-seater HP-45 'Horatius' of 1931 next to its KLM counterpart, the 14-seater America Douglas DC-2 of 1934. It was in 'Horatius' that Elgar flew to Paris in 1933.

### Plans for Paris

Following Elgar's recording of the Violin Concerto with Yehudi Menuhin in July 1932, Harold Holt, Menuhin's UK manager, wrote to Elgar proposing that the pair perform it in London in November. Elgar replied:

Many thanks for your letter. I shall be delighted to 'accompany' that wonderful artist Yehudi Menuhin, if matters can be arranged. Can you tell me what rehearsal we can have; the Concerto must not be first on the programme in any case and kindly tell me what fee you can suggest.<sup>9</sup>

- 9 28 July 1932, EB letter book 265. Elgar's friendly tone is commendable: four days earlier he had written to Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Keeper of the Privy Purse, about a suggestion that George V might become a patron of Thomas Beecham's London Philharmonic Orchestra, then in its early stages of formation. 'I do not think His Majesty should give his patronage to the proposed orchestra at this stage of its inception. Mr. Holt's name does not command much confidence; his partner the late Lionel Powell left the L.S.O. burdened with expenses for which the firm declined responsibility, leaving the L.S.O. in difficulty. The spectacle of a person of Lady Cunard's anomalous position collecting contributions in the King's Name does not appeal to me & shd. be unthinkable.' (EB letter book 265).

Matters were quickly arranged, and on 8 August Elgar wrote to Menuhin.

My very dear friend and artist ... I hasten to tell you that I gladly accepted the invitation of Mr Holt to “accompany” you at the Albert Hall on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Nothing in late years has given me so much real artistic joy as your playing of the Concerto ...<sup>10</sup>

The Menuhin family had a home in Paris, and Yehudi wrote from there in September.

Dear friend Sir Edward Elgar!

It gave me such pleasure to receive your letter in which you enclosed the “Études”,<sup>11</sup> and it made me very happy to know that the records pleased you.

You cannot imagine with what impatience I wait for Nov 20, and I hope, possibly, for May 31<sup>st</sup>. On that date I am giving a concert with orchestra in Paris and nothing would give me more pleasure than to play the concerto with you. Mr. [Georges] Enesco, (with whom I study) would conduct the Bach E major concerto and the “Symphonie Espagnole” of Lalo for me; and the program would close with your concerto. Please try to have that date open –

That would be the greatest pleasure and present you could possibly give me:- To introduce this concerto with you (in person) to the French people.

Many thanks again for the Études and Au Revoir in London,

Your loving and admiring,

Yehudi Menuhin<sup>12</sup>

By the end of November arrangements had been confirmed, and Menuhin’s father had written to say: ‘We will naturally meet you at the train in Paris once we know the exact date of your arrival, and thus save you the trouble of searching for us’.<sup>13</sup> A few days later Fred Gaisberg of HMV added: ‘I will certainly come to Paris for this concert as it is going to be unique’.<sup>14</sup> He confirmed this in April 1933, and Elgar replied:

The best news is that you will go to Paris: Can we travel together? It wd. be a boon inestimable to me if we could, or rather if you cd. put up with me. I have not been to France for years & have forgotten all the French I ever knew and Paris must have changed since 1880 (!) the first visit was made then: let me hear as soon as you can if you can endure me.<sup>15</sup>

Gaisberg later said that ‘Carice had made it a condition that I should act as escort, which I was delighted to do’.<sup>16</sup> It was his suggestion that they should fly:

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10 ‘Elgar and the Boy Violinist’, *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.11, No.2 (July 1999), 112.

11 The *Études Caractéristique pour Violon Seul*, Op.24, published in 1892, but which can be traced back to the late 1870s.

12 Elgar Birthplace Archive letter 2008, 28 September 1932.

13 EB letter 2003, 25 November 1931.

14 EB letter 4297, 28 November 1931.

15 EB letter 4297, 28 November 1931.

16 Fred Gaisberg, *Music on Record* (London: Robert Hale, 1947), 238.

I should really like to go by air. It is much less fatiguing and there is nothing to compare to the comfort of air travel. From Croydon to Le Bourget it usually takes from an hour and a half to two hours, depending on the wind. We will have the photographers down at Croydon to photograph the take-off. I will keep you fully informed as soon as I receive information.<sup>17</sup>

Elgar replied from The Rutland Arms Hotel, Newmarket, where he was staying as a guest of Somerville Tattersall for the week’s racing, saying: ‘I will await developments but I must send one word to say how happy I am in knowing that you will allow me to travel in your “suite”’.<sup>18</sup> Gaisberg sent details of the proposed arrangements by return of post.

I think you can safely count on leaving London by the afternoon plane on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup>. The car leaves Victoria Station at 2.45 and the plane takes off from Croydon at 3.30. In this case we should arrive in Paris a little after 5 o/c.

I will engage rooms at the Hotel Royal Monceau, Avenue Hoch, which is just opposite the Salle Pleyel where the concert is to take place. No doubt the rehearsals will be held on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. and the concert on the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup>. We can then arrange to return by the early morning plane leaving Le Bourget at 9 o/c, arriving in London about noon. How does this strike you? I will make provisional arrangements for carrying out the above plans.<sup>19</sup>

In his reply<sup>20</sup> Elgar announced his intention of taking his valet/chauffeur Dick Mountford, and also raised the possibility of visiting Delius, who lived on the outskirts of Paris. Gaisberg was happy to fall in with Elgar’s ideas, though thought ‘it would be best to arrange our plans so as to leave London by the mid-day plane on Sunday the 28th, arriving in Paris about 3 o/c’.<sup>21</sup> Elgar agreed, adding that he ‘may go down to Billy Reed at Croydon on Saturday (27th) & in that case should be close to the aerodrome ... P.S. Can you tell me what weight of baggage is allowed?’.<sup>22</sup>

Confirming the arrangements, Gaisberg wrote:

We will leave on Sunday by the late plane, namely Croydon 3.30, arriving Le Bourget at 5.45. Tickets have been taken and places booked on this plane for yourself, the writer and Richard.

Thirty-three pounds of luggage is allowed each passenger, but of course, you can take over-weight at a small charge per lb. In a moment of generosity I have decided to give you some of my 33 lbs. as I travel very light!

It is my intention to leave Paris by the morning plane on June 1<sup>st</sup>, leaving Paris at 8.15, Le Bourget 9 o/c and arriving at Croydon 11.15, and I have booked places on this plane.<sup>23</sup>

Carice’s diary entry for 27 May reads:

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17 5 May 1933, in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 199.

18 10 May 1933, in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 199.

19 EB letter 4240, 11 May 1933.

20 17 May 1933, in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 200.

21 EB letter 2598, 17 May 1933.

22 18 May 1933, in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 201.

23 EB letter 9122, 19 May 1933.

Went to Croydon to be there to meet Father – Went with V[era]. [Hockman] to Reeds about 3.30 He came about 4 – Very heavy shower – Went to Robin Hill<sup>24</sup> for dinner where he stayed. V. took Mrs. Reed home later. Father had had another bad turn but seemed quite all right again.<sup>25</sup>

**Elgar's record of the trip**

Elgar kept a daily record of the trip, on three loose sheets of foolscap paper, which I stumbled across in the Birthplace archive more than a decade ago – seemingly unnoticed by half a century of researchers. It is given in full here.<sup>26</sup>

Mem. Saty May 27<sup>th</sup> 1933

Left (11.15) Marl Bank in Car (Dick driving) for Croydon: held up in Oxford in side street (by-pass) Sandwich & tea on roadside (usual spot) six miles beyond Oxford. Made several bad shots at the route after Feltham: arrd. Croydon (Mr. Reed's Froom 33 Chatsworth Rd) Mrs. Blake (Babs), who was staying with Mrs. Hockman was at "Froom". Mrs. Reed (Billy away) & I sent over to Shirley to dine. Dick, after unloading, took the car to a Garage to remain until my return from Paris.<sup>27</sup>

Next day Carice:

Went to church at 8. Lovely quiet am. at Robin Hill – puzzle etc – Went to Mrs. Reed for lunch. I drove Father & Vera's car came too for luggage & saw him from aerodrome – wonderful to see it – photographers etc – & great excitement. Lovely weather. Got home about 7.30. Wine all safe.<sup>28</sup>



**Elgar about to board 'Heracles' at Croydon on 28 May. Carice is on the right: the other ladies hold records of the Violin Concerto for Elgar to autograph.** (Associated Press – Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

24 Vera Hockman lived at 'Robin Hill', in the village of Shirley, two miles to the east of the Reeds' house.  
 25 Carice Blake diary, 27 May 1933.  
 26 I have been unable to check the transcription I made at the time: Elgar's notes were never digitised, and are now at the British Library awaiting cataloguing.  
 27 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.  
 28 Carice Blake diary, 28 May 1933.

Elgar noted:

Sunday May 28<sup>th</sup>. Lovely day: rested & walked in morning. Lunch at Mrs. Reeds: at 2-45 Babs drove me to the aerodrome. Met Gaisberg. Aeroplane arrd. Paris 5.50. To Hotel Monceau, Av Hoche. Light dinner with Gaisberg.<sup>29</sup>

That evening he wrote to Carice.

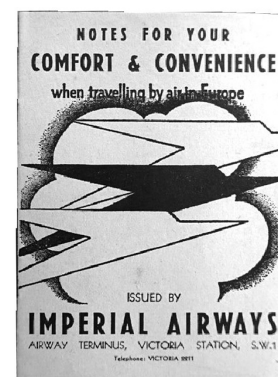
Dgck.<sup>30</sup>  
 What fun it was & wasn't it nice that zu were able to drive me yourself "she was alarmed" etc. I did not like the feeling of rising – but when up (nearly 8000 ft) it (and the descent) was lovely. It is so much easier than all that steamer business.

I will let you know of my return but I think I can travel straight thro'

Luv  
 EE<sup>31</sup>



**Fred Gaisberg, Dick Mountford and Elgar on arrival at Le Bourget.** (Keystone Press Agency – Arthur Reynolds' Archive)



TARIFF	
Biscuits	. . . 3d.
Mineral Water	. . . 4d.
Merrill	. . . 6d.
Chocolate per Canteen 50/100	
Coffee	. . . 6d.
Tea per Canteen	. . . 6d.
Champagne	. . . 10/6
Whisky	. . . 12/6
Gin	. . . 12/6
Port	. . . 12/6
Sherry	. . . 12/6
Stout	. . . 12/6
Beer	. . . 12/6
Wine	. . . 12/6
Soft Drinks	. . . 12/6
Ice Cream	. . . 12/6
Hotels	. . . 12/6
Trains	. . . 12/6
Carriage	. . . 12/6
Porter	. . . 12/6
Taxi	. . . 12/6
Limousine	. . . 12/6
Motor Car	. . . 12/6
Boat	. . . 12/6
Plane	. . . 12/6

**'Notes for your comfort and convenience when travelling by air in Europe'; baggage tags for the outward and return flights; and bar tariff.** (Celia Gardner's Collection)

29 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.  
 30 'Darling Chuck', a favourite salutation.  
 31 EB letter 367.

Gaisberg remembered that:

It was a fine day and Elgar enjoyed it with just a tinge of anxiety as he would grip the rails when we struck some air pockets on his first flight. He seemed to feel like a hero and had a daring smile on his face like a pleased boy. I still possess a crossword puzzle he successfully completed on that journey.<sup>32</sup>

Next day they lunched with the Menuhins.



**Elgar and the Menuhins at their home, 'Les Fauvettes', in Ville-d'Avray. (Elgar Birthplace Archive)**

Monday May 29<sup>th</sup>  
Lovely day

Mr. [Moshe] Menuhin called: drove us out to Ville d'Avray to lunch [Marutha Menuhin], Yalta, Hepzibah & Yehudi.

All very 'healthy' & gay. After lunch rested then Mr. Menuhin Drove us back to the Hotel. Mrs. Louise Dyer (Australian) who is greatly interested in Couperin celebrations & Mr. Dyer wd. call & take us to the Concert of C's works in the Arsenal Bibliotheque. Mr. Dyer an old Scotsman came – interminable accts of journey to Australia Melba etc<sup>33</sup> Long taxi drive

Sat with the [one word unchecked] Gaisberg came in late Rain thunder

G got a taxi, Mr. Dyer gave up doing anything. Long drive back to the hotel during which Mr. Dyer regaled G. with the same long rambling gossip which I had endured.

Dinner in Hotel with Gaisberg<sup>34</sup>

32 Fred Gaisberg, *Music on Record* (London: Robert Hale, 1947), 239.

33 James Dyer (1857-1938) was Australasian manager of Messrs Michael Nairn & Co. of Kirkcaldy, Scotland, manufacturers of linoleum. In 1911 he married the pianist Louise Smith (1884-1962), from Melbourne. They settled in Paris in 1927, where Louise published an edition of the music of Couperin under the imprint of *Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre*.

34 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.

Elgar rehearsed on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup>. He had written to Carice beforehand.

Tuesday a.m. 9.0c

Dgck. Just had your letter: I am so glad you 'eard on Sunday night. I've just had Mary's note written on Saturday, so post all undependable

We leave by first plane on Thursday. V says she'll meet us

Luv EE

Wot a time it was<sup>35</sup>

In the afternoon he visited Delius at his home in Grez-sur-Loing.

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May

to rehearsal Salle Pleyel good orchestra Enesco an excellent musician, rehearsed & Yehudi played splendidly – at twelve Mr. Menuhin drove Gaisberg & me to Villa d'Avray to lunch. [one word unchecked] party – Beer. Rested a little in Yehudi's room. Then in taxi drove to see Delius – thro Fontainebleau first – had nearly two hours delightful time.

Drove back to Hotel Late light dinner.<sup>36</sup>



**Georges Enesco, Elgar and Yehudi Menuhin outside the Salle Pleyel concert hall (see also the interview with Yehudi Menuhin). (Elgar Birthplace Archive)**

Accounts of the visit have been left by both Elgar and Delius.<sup>37</sup> In his *Daily Telegraph* article Elgar recounted how he described to Delius his experience of flight.

I inquired what prospects there were of seeing him in London. There is nothing Delius would like better ... But the journey, the going from train to steamer and from steamer to train, is, for him, too arduous an undertaking. Having flown from Croydon to Paris, I suggested the pleasant alternative, and pointed out how after motoring to Le Bourget he could reach London by aeroplane in less than two hours.

The prospect attracted him. 'What is flying like?' he asked. 'Well', I answered, 'to put it poetically, it is not unlike your life and my life. The rising from the ground was a little difficult; you cannot tell exactly how you are going to stand it. When once you have reached the heights it is very different. There is a delightful feeling of elation in sailing through gold and silver clouds. It is, Delius, rather like your music – a little intangible sometimes, but always very beautiful. I should have liked to stay there for ever. The descent is like our old age – peaceful, even serene.'

My description must have pleased Delius. Up went the left hand; 'I will fly', he said determinedly.

35 EB letter 368.

36 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.

37 The visit was described by Elgar in his article 'My Visit to Delius' (*Daily Telegraph*, 1 July 1933), reprinted in Christopher Redwood (ed.), *A Delius Companion* (London: John Calder, 1976), pp.93-95; and by Delius in conversation with Eric Fenby, recounted in Eric Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 2nd edition (London: Icon Books, 1966), 123-125.

Elgar's concert was next day.

Wedy 31<sup>st</sup> May

Gaisberg said he must stay till Friday. Black dismay of EE. at the idea of travelling alone so G arranged for E's ticket for Friday also.

To Salle Pleyel at 10 oc rehearsal. Enesco most helpful: rehearsal good Yehudi better than ever – light lunch – very hot day. Rested all afternoon. Dinner with Gaisberg. Concert at 9. All well back at 12 –<sup>38</sup>

The concert received very little coverage in the British press. Only one review was kept by Carice, that by the American music critic and writer Gilbert Chase, Paris correspondent of *The Musical Times* and *Musical America*.

... Sir Edward himself conducted the performance.

Another handicap that the Concerto had to face on this occasion was the fact that it came at the end of the programme, when the attention of the audience is not so keen and receptivity is at its lowest ebb.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of these adverse factors, the work was cordially received. After the performance Sir Edward and Menuhin were several times recalled to acknowledge the applause.

Hardly a ringing endorsement! Some national dailies mentioned the concert as an important cultural and social event in Parisian life, but only the *Daily Herald* saw fit to refer to the performance.

PARIS GOES WILD OVER ELGAR.  
EVEN ORCHESTRA STOOD AND CHEERED.  
From Our Own Correspondent, PARIS, Wednesday.

The Continent discovered Elgar tonight.

Distinguished musicians and critics from all parts of Europe packed the biggest concert hall in Paris to hear Sir Edward Elgar – sitting in a chair – conduct his Violin Concerto, the solo part which was played by 16-years-old Yehudi Menuhin.

The audience shouted and cheered as Elgar stood on the platform, supported by Menuhin. Even the orchestra – the Paris Symphony Orchestra, perhaps the finest in France – stood up and waved and cheered.

“I am glad they liked this work of mine”, Elgar told me. Then, pointing to Menuhin – “He is a marvellous artist, a beautiful interpreter. My concerto could not have been played better.”

Then a little complaint. “To think that I was over here 20 years ago and it is only now they are making a fuss of me!”<sup>40</sup>

Elgar wrote again to Carice ...

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38 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.

39 Unidentified review, EB press cuttings album.

40 *Daily Herald*, 1 June 1933.

Thursday  
1<sup>st</sup> June 1933

Dgck.

Mr. Gaisberg cd not get away today – hence the change. I'm half hoping you may be at Croydon but 'one' can scarcely expect that! So I send this now as it will seem such a long time etc.

If Dick is feeling all right to drive I shall go to Worcester at once – but we shall see.

All went well – the usual crowd of insincerity & pushing I promised Koussiwitsky<sup>41</sup> to go to conduct in U.S.A. next season etc etc but I will not write all the tripe. I had a very nice visit to Delius who is better than the portrait, well & really gay! We had a bottle of fizzy! together EE<sup>42</sup>

... and recorded in his notes.

Thursday June 1<sup>st</sup>  
Black day

Very hot. Menuhin family called – delighted with Concert. Lunch with Gaisberg – walked a little but weather too hot

Gaisberg was going to [one word unchecked] Printemps<sup>43</sup> but lost his voice, so we drove round the Bois & dined chez Bouquet. To bed early very hot & thirsty: at 10 oc (in bedroom) I rang for waiter & ordered St. Gilmer. He sd, with a agreeable smile “You are finished – you are no more” etc etc meaning, as I found eventually, that the bill was paid & that the St. Gilmer must be pd for<sup>44</sup>

Then it was time to return to England. Carice and Vera were at the airport to meet him.

Sheepshearers came. Lovely day. Left at 8.30 & got to Vera's at 10.15 went on with her to aerodrome – plane ½ hr early so could not see it land – Father all safe & very well & had loved it – Mr. Gaisberg bad cold – Drove him to Mr. Reed's had champagne for his birthday & heard about Paris & Delius – Mr. Gaisberg & photographers came & took pictures of him being toasted – He left with Dick for Worcester about 12.30.<sup>45</sup>

Elgar completed his record of the trip.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Rose at 7 Lovely day. Left the Aerodrome Le Bourget at 9.0 – had tea & sandwich<sup>46</sup> 4500 feet up lovely passage & arrd Croydon at 10.50

Carice & Mrs. Hockman with cars sd. goodbye to Gaisberg. Drove to Billy's house. He & James<sup>47</sup> away in own. Dick fetched my car from the garage.

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41 Serge Koussevitsky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

42 EB letter 372, 1 June 1933.

43 Printemps department store, opened in 1865 at the corner of Le Havre and Boulevard Haussmann.

44 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.

45 Carice Blake diary, 2 June 1933.

46 Sandwiches were priced at 1/- per round; tea 4d.

47 Billy Reed's wife Eveline, know to her friends as 'James'.

Then surprisingly Gaisberg turned up with 2 press photographers – the aeroplane was before time so they missed us.

Photo taken in Billy's garden

Goodbye

Drove home

Tea & egg Woodstock called at Maimies Broadway<sup>48</sup> arrd at Marl Bank about 5.45. Yelps!<sup>49</sup>



**Carice, Elgar and Gaisberg in the garden of Billy Reed's home, 2 June.** (Fox Photos – Elgar Birthplace Archive)

*Berrow's* reported:

Sir Edward Elgar left Paris immediately after breakfast, and when he reached Croydon Aerodrome there was waiting a car to take him to Epsom races.<sup>50</sup> He was positively chuckling when a Press Association reporter met him at the aerodrome. "It was splendid", he said, referring to the flight. "It is only my second flight – I flew over to Paris last week – but flying for me every time. No more tiresome trains or boats. I had a good breakfast before I left Paris, and we made a good crossing – 25 minutes under scheduled time. That was a good start for a birthday, wasn't it?"

Sir Edward has always been a lover of racing. Asked if he backed the Derby winner, his eyes twinkled as he replied, "I don't make mistakes on horses. At music, perhaps, but I can pick out a winner."<sup>51</sup> I am hoping to get a birthday winner also."<sup>52</sup>

48 Mary 'Maimie' de Navarro recalled: 'On his last birthday he suddenly burst into the music-room; he was greatly excited at just having flown over from Paris. He looked rosy and gay (he always had a very fresh, clear complexion). That was the last time our old house, which he loved, ever saw him.' Mary de Navarro, *A Few More Memories* (London: Hutchinson, 1936), 212.

49 Elgar Paris notes, EB342.

50 journalistic licence!

51 The winner was Hyperion, the 6/1 favourite. In a letter to Elgar of 22 May, Somerville Tattersall had said: 'Those I like best (none very much) in the Derby are Hyperion, Happy Call, Light Sussex & Harinero.'

52 *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 10 June 1933.

## Epilogue

Elgar was quick to write letters of thanks to those who helped to make the trip both enjoyable and fulfilling. He wrote to Delius while still in Paris, saying: 'Before boarding the aeroplane for England I send a note to thank you and Mrs. Delius for your charming welcome. It was a great privilege to see you and I was delighted to find you so much better than the newspapers led me to expect'.<sup>53</sup> His thoughtfulness was much appreciated by Jelka Delius, who wrote: 'To-day we received a little letter of thanks for the Welcome he had received here. (Such a thing as all these ridiculous Mangeots and Perkins<sup>54</sup> etc. would never think of.)'<sup>55</sup>

In the coming days he wrote to Gaisberg:

I got back safely & found Marco Mina etc. well & wellcoming [sic] ... I do not know how to thank you for all you did – so I do not try, but believe me I am very grateful. Our visit to Delius was a great event for me.<sup>56</sup>

... Georges Enesco:

Dear Mr. Enesco, I take the earliest opportunity to thank you for all your kind and invaluable assistance in preparing the orchestra for Yehudi Menuhin's Concert. It was a great pleasure to meet you & to witness your consummate command of the orchestra.<sup>57</sup>

... Marutha Menuhin:

I take the earliest opportunity to write to thank you and all your charming family for your great kindness to me in Paris. I was sorry to have to rush away, but I brought with me the happiest memories of you all, including dear Yehudi's marvellous and soul-satisfying playing.<sup>58</sup>

... Moshe Menuhin:

I sent a hurried line to Madame M. – all I could find time for in the busy turmoil I was hurled into here ... All thanks to you for making my time in Paris a pleasant one. I can say nothing more about Yehudi's playing beyond what I have written in my note to him today – it is marvellous.<sup>59</sup>

... and Yehudi:

As I said to your sisters, I have been overwhelmed with "business" things since my return, or I should have written earlier to thank you for the Concerto.

53 EB letter 9479, 31 May 1933.

54 The violinist André Mangeot and the pianist Helen Perkin, both recent visitors to Grez-sur-Loing.

55 Letter to Eric Fenby, 3 June 1933, published in Lionel Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters 1909-1934* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988), 421.

56 EB letter 10661, 3 June 1933.

57 EB letter book 264, 6 June 1933.

58 4 June 1933, in 'Elgar and the Boy Violinist', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.11, No.2, July 1999, 114.

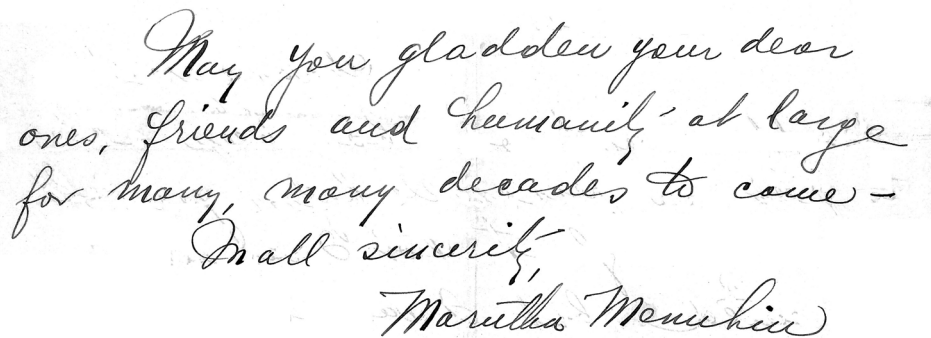
59 6 June 1933, in 'Elgar and the Boy Violinist', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.11, No.2, July 1999, 114.



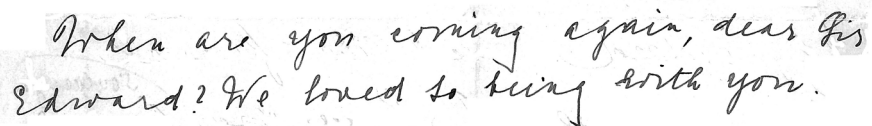
You have made it your own, and your playing last week was, in some way, grander than last year, although last year I did not think it was possible to improve on your reading. A week ago to-day we were in the midst of it, and it remains an enduring impression for which I thank you most sincerely. I hope the photographs are not too awful: the moving ones, of course, I cannot see, but I should like to have any of the still ones as a memento.

Goodbye, my dear boy. – With love, I am your affectionate friend, Edward Elgar.<sup>60</sup>

**The Menuhins' letter to Elgar of 8 June.** (*Elgar Birthplace Archive*)



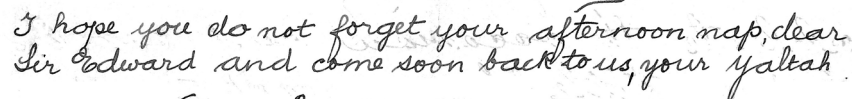
May you gladden your dear ones, friends and humanity at large for many, many decades to come -  
In all sincerity,  
Marutha Menuhin



When are you coming again, dear Sir Edward? We loved so being with you.

Affectionately,

Hephzibah



I hope you do not forget your afternoon nap, dear Sir Edward and come soon back to us, your Yaltah.

Sincere, hearty greetings,

Moshe Menuhin

Love, Congratulations, and many thanks again, as ever  
your Yehudi

60 6 June 1933, in 'Elgar and the Boy Violinist', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.11, No.2, July 1999, 114.

The family replied as one on the 8<sup>th</sup> – a touching finale to Elgar's visit to France.

May you gladden your dear ones, friends and humanity at large for many, many decades to come –  
In all sincerity,  
Marutha Menuhin

When are you coming again, dear Sir Edward? We loved so being with you.  
Affectionately,  
Hephzibah

I hope you do not forget your afternoon nap, dear Sir Edward and come soon back to us, your Yaltah  
Sincere, hearty, greetings,  
Moshe Menuhin

Love, Congratulations, and many thanks again, as ever  
your Yehudi<sup>61</sup>

*My thanks are due to Celia Gardner, a close friend of Dick Mountford and his family, for providing pictures of the Imperial Airways items from the Paris flights; and to Jim Davies, of the British Airways Heritage Collection, for searching – albeit fruitlessly – through the weekly staff magazine, the 'Imperial Airways Gazette', for mentions of Elgar and his flights.*

*Martin Bird was born in June 1947 and died suddenly on 3rd May 2019 leaving a huge hole in primary source Elgar scholarship. Following early retirement from his career, he could turn his considerable abilities to Elgar, one of his first musical loves. He embarked on a truly epic journey, transcribing the diaries and correspondence of Elgar, his family and his circle and transcribing also a wealth of other material. His dataset comprised millions of words and was the perfect complement to the musical works in the 'Elgar Complete Edition', which has been steadily publishing his prodigious output. He was editor of the 'Elgar Society Journal' from 2011 to 2016. He gave generously of his time to his successor as Editor, Meinhard Saremba, and sent him contributions for his regular column '100 Years Ago' until December 2019. A fuller biographical tribute to him appears in this month's News.*

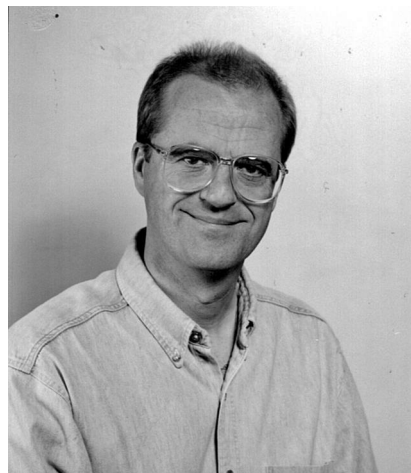
61 EB letter 2012.

## Elgar as a conductor (part 1)

### An interview with Yehudi Menuhin

#### Wynne Brindle

*Some months ago the Elgar Society received typewritten transcriptions of two interviews concerning 'Elgar as a conductor' with Yehudi Menuhin and Adrian Boult. They were conducted by Wynne Brindle (1943-1994) but probably never broadcast although Brindle had experience of broadcasting. He worked in the BBC Film Library and then moved to the Open University as a copyright and contracts manager. He later moved to London and joined the Open College as rights manager. Just before his untimely death he founded a caring agency for the elderly and disabled. Wynne Brindle had a lifelong interest in classical music and developed a particular love of Elgar. His sister, Margaret Walter, who provided the material and a photo, assumes the Open University took an interest in 'Elgar as a conductor' although she cannot find anything to support this. She thinks that it must have been entirely her brother's own project. Although the Boult interview took place about three weeks earlier, the Menuhin interview is a perfect match to Martin Bird's essay 'An Englishman in Paris' in this issue because Elgar performed with the violinist in the French capital. The interview is reproduced in its original wording which records the oral form. To facilitate the readability sounds like 'er', 'a' or 'um' are put in brackets.*



The interview took place in Worcester on 9 November 1974.

*Wynne Brindle:* Can you recall your first meeting with Elgar?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes, of course. Well, I think that is pretty well documented and known, because I've told the story so often you know. When we met, my father and I drove over from France during the summer of, I think – '32, was it, and we had an appointment with Sir Edward at the Grosvenor House. There was a piano put into the room and there was, [um,] Ivor Newton at the...

waiting, and it was, I think, a Saturday afternoon just after lunch and he was there and I was very impressed, because I was, after all, only sixteen and I was meeting one of the great composers of the world – and to meet a live composer when I'd only met about – well, one or two live composers before then. Most of the music I played was from composers long dead. Ernest Bloch was the other great live composer I knew since I was five, anyway, I'd started playing this with some trepidation – I'd only learned the work for some two months, when Elgar stopped us and said he had no worry – it was fine. He was looking forward to the Monday and he was off to the races! That was my first meeting, but it was a very impressive presence because I'd always imagined, you know how children are – they associate a concept with a particular person and Ernest Bloch was a rather wild-haired, shaggy, a very [um] romantic, exuberant fiery, volcanic presence and that was my idea of a composer, and of course, meeting Sir Edward, who was an English gentleman and a composer, who above all wanted to go to the races, rather than hear his own composition played, [um] indicating a faith, a modesty, simplicity and a natural love of other things than music, [a,] which I'd never known of composers who had (?) – that, seemed to me an extraordinary thing in itself. Then, when we met on the Monday morning at St. John's Wood – Abbey Road, I was again amazed, because the conductors I'd played with really work at conducting – they [um,] they made their points, they made great gestures, they tried to impress the orchestra and no doubt the audience as well. Well, there was none of that with Sir Edward. He stood there, and as far as I could see, did nothing at all. He, the... it was sufficient, his presence and also his conception and the fact that his work was a native indigenous work with its roots in the hearts of all the players – it wasn't as if he had to teach them what to feel about it – he didn't have to teach them a matter of style, he didn't have to guide them from one note to the next, he just let it flow, and as he was there, [the..., the...,] the great man whose music it was, one felt as one with him. It wasn't, [um,] at all the idea of being coached by an intermediary, a middle-man, you were simply guided by the presence of the composer – and such a sweet and benign one. Never any hard words, never any ironic criticism, never anything but pleasure, pleasure that his music was being played – and it was therefore played beautifully, and apparently he must have liked the way I did it, because I remember his saying that he particularly appreciated the fact that I gave his music [a,] – you know – the richness, the flesh and blood quality of the romantic which he was.

*Wynne Brindle:* It was a particularly intimate work as far as Elgar was concerned wasn't it? It was inward looking...

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes – it was.

*Wynne Brindle:* The 'soul' of the work was very dear to his heart: were you conscious of this?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes, I think so, I was very intuitive and, in a way, still am when I'm with composers, and [um,] – it's a very violinistic work. One must not forget that Elgar wrote for the violin in a most amazing way, and [um,] it has a violinist who is sensitive [to...] to the stactyle (?) way of going about music, has, revels, at least I did in the freedom, in the improvisatory quality of this work. I've always loved work with an improvising – aspect of quality and this work, which is like all Elgar's music – something which moves with the breeze, with the wind, moves with the feeling of the composer; it's not static, it's never static, nor is the rhythm ever static. I think I must have had a natural affinity for that kind of music.

*Wynne Brindle:* You are quoted once as saying – in the play-through with Ivor Newton, after the play-through, there's a particularly difficult section of semi-quavers – rushing semi-quavers at

the opening of the finale, you asked Elgar, could they be played... I think you were experiencing some difficulty, and he said 'No – the music must flow on.' Do you think the Concerto is too long?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* No, I can't think that, because I play it and enjoy it – I do believe though in the last, [um,] there is a moment when it sort of begins all over again in the development section but maybe..., but when it's played with dedication, devotion, it doesn't register as too long.

*Wynne Brindle:* Albert Sammons once cut the last movement...

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes, I know and I've tried to cut it, but not in England, though once I did it in England, and never again, because I wasn't forgiven for it! It was simply a feeling that I wanted to keep everybody's attention to the very end, and yet, the extraordinary thing is, no matter how long the work may be, or people may at one moment – this moment in the last movement where their concentration wears a little bit thin, [a,] they never... – they are always fascinated by the cadenza, but to be able to recapture completely with such delicate, mysterious evocation as that cadenza is, to be able to recapture after some forty-odd minutes of music an audience's attention with something as 'Will o'-the-Wisp' as that is, I think, quite an achievement.

*Wynne Brindle:* Did the recording present any special problems?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* No, there was just in those days the usual, [a,] the work had to be sliced up into appropriate lengths and places found where we could stop.

*Wynne Brindle:* I was talking to Boult about three weeks ago, just before he went into hospital and he said nothing we hear of Elgar is authoritative – his performances were often rushed because of the four minute side, he was very conscious of this...

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Oh was he? Well, I don't think..., I don't think our performance was rushed, I think he... – we had plenty of time – I mean...

*Wynne Brindle:* The transcription from 78's to LP proves this, doesn't it?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes. No it wasn't at all, [er,] there was plenty of time. I think he really loved, and sort of (*pause*) was bathed in the music and I felt the same too. There was no feeling of trying to get the thing done, or being forced – we just loved the music.

*Wynne Brindle:* We've talked about Elgar's presence and his influence over his players, [um,] in more practical terms, what was his beat like?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Well, that's very difficult for me so to speak, I would be [um,] a fraud if I told you I remembered it – exactly what his beat was like, I don't. The only thing as I say, that struck me was there appeared to be none. (*laughs*) In other words it couldn't have been one of those hard, authoritative, military beats, that certainly wasn't the case. I think it must have been a very fluid beat that had [um,] a minimum of angles and edges.

*Wynne Brindle:* What about the left hand?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* I can't remember. I don't think – he probably kept his left hand in his pocket as far as I remember. I don't think he (?) did very much...

*Wynne Brindle:* And the face?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* (*pause*) The face was benign. I don't think the face at any time, [er,] revealed

violent emotion. I think it revealed deep sensitivity and warmth and, and, how shall I say [-er,] a feeling of being with the performance, with the music, but I don't believe it ever reflected, [er,] exteriorized passion. I don't think it went into [er, er,] how shall I say, [um,] violent exhibitions of any kind.

*Wynne Brindle:* Turning from the recording, you played the concerto twice under Elgar, at the Royal Albert Hall and in Paris...

*Yehudi Menuhin:* That's right ...

*Wynne Brindle:* Why do you think the work was chosen for Paris?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Well, I chose it, because I wanted to bring it to France. I knew that it had never been played in Paris, I adored Elgar and I didn't see why I shouldn't introduce it with the composer to the French public. It seemed a wonderful thing to do, a wonderful opportunity, and I must say they received it well – they didn't understand – the French always have a certain reserve when it comes to acknowledging anything English as you know and, [um,] but the French orchestra behaved very well, which is a tribute to the music and to Georges Enesco, who rehearsed the orchestra.

*Wynne Brindle:* You said that English orchestras responded well under Elgar; how did the French cope?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Well, Enesco was admirable. He'd rehearsed the work thoroughly – to excellence... There was nobody in the world who was a greater musician than Enesco and he gave the work its shape, its beauty and he got the musicians to play beautifully and they respected him and they loved the work; so that by the time, at the last rehearsal, which was the third already Elgar conducted, he found everything in place. There was no need for him to stop the orchestra as I remember, we just played it through at the rehearsal – the last rehearsal, because it was all there.

*Wynne Brindle:* Was Elgar pleased with the response from the audience?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes he was pleased and it was something unusual too, because I don't think many of his works had been played, if any, in France...

*Wynne Brindle:* ... because Elgar was very sensitive to audience reaction, wasn't he?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Yes, yes!

*Wynne Brindle:* Well, time is running on: can you finally sum up by saying, by paraphrasing what you've said about Elgar as a conductor.

*Yehudi Menuhin:* Well, Elgar reminded me very much I think of Strauss as a conductor, because Strauss too, you'll be hard-put to see, to detect any particular movement. The movements were all there, but they were almost on the microscopic side and, [a,] Strauss was a wonderful conductor and again, it was the feeling that the music was self-evident. Being self-evident to the composer, it somehow, through a process of osmosis or some communication became self-evident to the orchestra and the composer didn't have to [er,] throw himself about. I found the music just spoke. It was sufficient almost for Elgar to just stand there, for the music to take place.

*Wynne Brindle:* Have you any general comment on Elgar's other recordings?

*Yehudi Menuhin:* I'm afraid I don't, because I don't know them.

[*Wynne Brindle winds-up discussion and thanks Yehudi Menuhin.*]

## ELGAR AS A CONDUCTOR

Interview with Yehudi Menuhin

Worcester 9 xi 1974

Wynne

... Can you recall your first meeting with Elgar?

Menuhin

Yes, of course. Well, I think that is pretty well documented and known, because I've told the story so often you know. When we met, my father and I drove over from France during the summer of, I think - '32, was it, and we had an appointment with Sir Edward at the Grosvenor House. There was a piano put into the room and there was, um, Ivor Newton at the... waiting, and it was, I think, a Saturday afternoon just after lunch and he was there and I was very impressed, because I was, after all, only sixteen and I was meeting one of the great composers of the world - and to meet a live composer when I'd only met about - well, one or two live composers before then. Most of the music I played was from composers long dead. Ernest Bloch was the other great live composer I knew since I was five, anyway, I'd started playing this with some trepidation - I'd only learned the work for some two months, when Elgar stopped us and said he had no worry - it was fine. He was looking forward to the Monday and he was off to the races! That was my first meeting, but it was a very impressive presence because I'd always imagined, you know how children are - they associate a concept with a particular person and Ernest Bloch was a rather wild-haired, shaggy, a very um romantic, exuberant fiery, volcanic presence and that was my idea of a composer, and of course, meeting Sir Edward, who was an English gentleman and a composer, who above all wanted to go to the races, rather than hear his own composition played, um indicating a faith, a modesty, simplicity and a natural love of other things than music, a - which I'd never known of composers who had (?) - that, seemed to me an extraordinary thing in itself. Then, when we met on the Monday morning at St. John's Wood - Abbey Road, I was again amazed, because the conductors I'd played with really worked at conducting - they um, they made their points, they made great gestures, they tried to impress

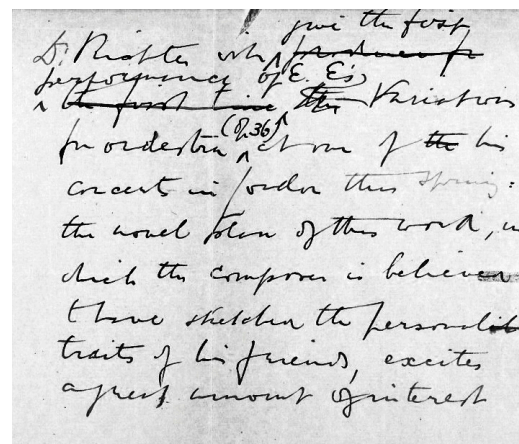
First page of the original typewritten transcription of Wynne Brindle's interview with Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999)  
[Margaret Walters]

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Richard Westwood-Brookes: *Elgar and the Press: a life in newsprint***

Elgar would have us believe that he had no interest in what the newspapers were writing about him, and rarely, if ever, read reviews of his music. Yet music critics were among his close friends - Robert Buckley, Alfred Kalisch, Robin Legge and Ernest Newman to name but four - and he and Alice regularly issued press releases, such as this one about the forthcoming première of the 'Enigma' Variations.

Dr. Richter will produce for the first time the give the first performance of E.E.'s Variations for orchestra (Op 36) at one of his concerts in London this spring: the novel plan of this work, in which the composer is believed to have sketched the personal traits of his friends, excites a great amount of interest



give the first performance of E.E.'s Variations for orchestra (Op 36) at one of his concerts in London this Spring: the novel plan of this work, in which the composer is believed to have sketched the personal traits of his friends, excites a great amount of interest

(Elgar Birthplace Archive)

And from 1890 Alice kept albums of press cuttings - looking at the catalogue I compiled I see they contain nearly 7,000 items for the years 1890-1914 - and there is evidence that the Elgars subscribed to a cuttings service for much of this period.

It is these cuttings albums which have provided Richard Westwood-Brookes with much of the material for this very welcome book. After a general introduction, separate chapters are devoted to the early productions of each of Elgar's major works, and to the Birmingham lectures. The treatment is comprehensive, covering analysis and impressions of the works themselves, their performance, and much local colour; so that the reader is given not



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only a musical history but a vivid social history as well. And in an age in which just above every national, provincial and local newspaper provided comprehensive coverage of concerts large and small, there is a wealth of material from which to choose, all woven together seamlessly by Richard.

It is too easy to regard impressions handed down – not least by the Elgars themselves – as the whole truth about these early performances: *Gerontius* was scuppered by the chorus; the Second Symphony was utterly unappreciated by a sparse audience; the Cello Concerto was ruined by lack of rehearsal. And of course there is more than a grain of truth in this, especially from the poor composer's point of view. But it is by no means the whole truth: the leading music critics were men of intelligence and integrity, and took their duties seriously, studying the score beforehand, and attending rehearsals. So there a wealth of well-written, well-argued material appeared in the contemporary press, and we are truly indebted to Richard for bringing it together for us.

Of course not all newspapers could muster critics of the front rank, and when researching Elgar's 1910 concert to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the *Sunderland Philharmonic Society*, in which Maud Warrender sang *Sea Pictures* and Leonora Speyer played the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, I was delighted to come across the *Hull Daily Mail's* review of a recital given by the two ladies the very next day:

Lady Maud Warrender executed her agreeable contralto with equal control and spirit in the Handelian air "Ombra mai fu" – delivered by her in the liquid vocables of Italy and achieved even better breadth in the emotion-charged song of Elgar, "O soft was the song".

Lady Speyer played such a sonata as Handel's in A major with a satin sheen and a sense of chiaroscuro [light and shade] that, in their right proportions, spell enjoyment unalloyed.

Miss Muriel Wilson, who last night reappeared upon the scene of many triumphs, recited "The Cremation of Sam McGee".

That review never made it into a cuttings album – a shame, for it would have appealed to Elgar's sense of humour – but comes from the British Library's online British Newspaper Archive. An annual subscription to that will cost you £80: you can buy Richard's book for a mere £15, and it is worth every penny.

I am frequently asked how to obtain books reviewed in the *Journal*, particularly self-published ones such as this. It is available from Amazon, among others, and the price includes free delivery. A Kindle Edition is also available for less than £5.

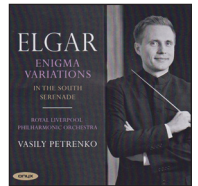
My copy was an early production one, and as well as lacking page numbers, something has gone awry with the page breaks between Word document and printed book. I raised this with Richard and the problems should have been rectified by the time this review appears.

A thoroughly worthwhile book covering a hitherto neglected area in Elgar literature.

Martin Bird

## CD REVIEWS

**Elgar: *Enigma Variations* (op 36)  
Concert Overture: *In the South* (op 50)  
*Serenade for Strings in E minor* (op 20)**  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra  
Conducted by Vasily Petrenko



Onyx 4205

Several Russian maestri have been dedicated performers of Elgar's music – Svetlanov and Rozhdestvensky spring immediately to mind, and more recently Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov and Vassily Sinaisky. It would seem that Vasily Petrenko is following the same great tradition, his recent series of Elgar recordings showing real love and understanding of the composer. This present CD is a remarkable success. *In the South*, one of Elgar's most impetuous openings, is taken at a (relatively) steady tempo, although there is no loss of excitement, and the crystal clear recording allows any amount of orchestral detail to shine through. Flecks of colour from the triangle and bass drum thwacks are vividly caught, and the splendour of the RLPO's playing is heard in wonderfully detailed sound. But the score has its magically reflective moments too. After this heady opening, and before the 'Roman' section lies a long tranquillo section which is lovingly played. The 'Roman' section itself has a grim. Implacable rhythmic tread, those brazen grinding discords being quite unlike anything else in the composer's output.

As the music winds down to the 'Canto Popolare' interlude I have rarely heard the section where each string section is divided into three played with such sensuous warmth (just after Fig. 33) -, and the following peaceful scene, redolent of a warm, starlit Italian night, magical, with solo viola and solo horn etching their melody against a shimmer of divided top strings, harp and glockenspiel. Then the music gathers speed and power in a grand recapitulation and coda that brings the work to a jubilant conclusion. If this is not the most fiery or headlong performance that I have heard, it is certainly full of Italian warmth, and shows the RLPO to be a first-rate ensemble, all captured in vivid, full bodied sound.

The *Enigma Variations* are equally successful. It is a reading, without quirks or point-making, that I could live with very happily. Particularly noteworthy are Variation 2 (H.D.S-P.) where the extremely tricky string writing is brilliantly delivered, and the clarity of the recording allows the distant timpani rhythm to register properly; the exuberance of Variation 4 (W.M.B.) and the madcap chase of Variation 7 (Troyte), both brilliantly played at a cracking pace; and Nimrod, which is kept moving at, for me, an ideal tempo. The Finale rounds things off in a magisterial way, with the organ suitably prominent, and an exciting build-up to the end.

The disc is completed by a coolly affectionate reading of the early

String Serenade. All in all, a worthy successor to Petrenko's previous Elgar discs, superbly recorded and played by an orchestra on top form, and fully recommended to anyone wanting these particular works. For Vasily Petrenko, surely the Elgar Medal beckons before too long?

Barry Collett



Dutton Epoch  
CDLX 7363

**Elgar: The Spanish Lady, Op. 89 symphonic suite  
(realised by Martin Yates)  
Organ Sonata, Op. 28 (orchestrated by Gordon Jacob)  
Severn Suite, Op. 87**

**Civic Fanfare (1927, 1933 and undated versions)**

Christopher Nickol, organ

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Conducted by Martin Yates

On occasions, discussion of arrangements of Elgar's music have caused dissent within the pages of this Journal. On the whole any arrangement comes down to a matter of opinion or taste. Sometimes the arrangement is brilliant but, try as I might, I find it is not to my liking. On the other hand, it may be a bizarre arrangement such as a jazz band playing *Salut d'amour* which can amuse on a first hearing. Elgar, of course, made his own arrangements of the music of other composers: the Bach, Chopin and Handel pieces being the most obvious examples. Elgar would have been in no position to complain about Gordon Jacob's brilliant orchestration of his Organ Sonata (not that I could imagine he would have done so). Furthermore, I suspect he would have been very grateful to Martin Yates for his scholarship in producing the Suite from his late attempt at writing an opera. Lastly, I imagine he would have been astonished at the work that has been put into establishing and dating the various versions of the *Civic Fanfare* from 1927.

In his indispensable notes to the CD, Lewis Foreman make the point that the first movement of the Organ Sonata 'can sometimes seem to be buried in encompassing organ tone.' I had the privilege of attending the first recording of the Jacob version in Liverpool in 1986 with Vernon Handley conducting the RLPO. I remember being surprised not just at the disinterment of the first movement but of the whole piece; Elgar's organ writing often lost in the acoustic of a large cathedral. Other than the Handley recording I can recall hearing the Jacob orchestration in a Promenade Concert (conducted by Barry Wordsworth) but, otherwise, it has been unjustly ignored since it was 'rediscovered'. I love this version because it is true to Elgar (Jacob has put himself in Elgar's mind), and for its brilliance and clarity. The RSNO has a superb woodwind section which responds with enthusiasm to Jacob's orchestration. Listen, in particular to the clarinet playing the second subject of the first movement. This version, as Foreman suggests, a possible

'Symphony No 0'. It is extraordinary to consider that Elgar, having written this four-movement piece in 1895, would take another thirteen years before completing the A Flat Symphony. There is not much between these two recordings of the Jacob arrangement but I would choose the Yates version for his performance of the presto where his more measured tempo allows greater clarity whilst sustaining the excitement of the charge to the brilliant ending. This movement, in particular, so often becomes 'buried' in the acoustic of its surroundings and Jacob (with help from the RSNO and Martin Yates) serves it up fresh and clear!

*The Spanish Lady* Symphonic Suite was 'realised from Elgar's sketches' by Martin Yates. Over the years various excerpts from the 'opera' have been recorded. In 1995 the BBC issued a CD (BBCMM138) of a 'performing version' by the late Percy Young made in Cambridge, and some of the music (I believe from Young's version) was recorded in Munich by Douglas Bostock in 2000 (Classico CLASSCD 334). In 1999 John Longstaff also made use of the music in his ballet *Great Expectations* (NPC Records NPC 021). Martin Yates has thought again and, like Gordon Jacobs has the ability to think like Elgar. Yates's four-movement suite is a glorious reminder of Elgar's gift for melody - newly resurrected tunes and old ones revisited such as that used in the sketches for the 6th *Pomp and Circumstance* March. Would Elgar have completed his opera? Frankly I doubt it. Did his work on it prevent the completion of his third Symphony? Possibly. In any event we have music from both works which, in this case, has been given new life by Martin Yates and the RSNO. It deserves a wider audience than just this CD. As Elgar was working on *The Spanish Lady* Richard Strauss was also working on an opera based on a Ben Johnson play (*Epicoene*) which became, in the hands of Stefan Zweig, his *Die Schweigsame Frau* (The Silent Woman), another satirical pricking of pomposity. Strauss was a great opera composer and had the experience and knowledge to get his eleventh opera into production at a very difficult time politically. In contrast, Elgar was still learning how to compose in a form in which he had no experience.

That a short work, lasting just over a minute, could produce three different versions and an analyses of these occupy several pages of this esteemed Journal is, on the face of it, extraordinary. I need only direct readers to the recent article (Journal, Vol. 20 No 3) to discover the fascinating story behind the three autograph scores now edited and performed here. I have always felt the *Civic Fanfare* to be rather special and have encouraged its performance on a couple of occasions. Take your choice here or, rather, indulge in all three versions with the organ of Christopher Nickol adding to the sonority and reminding us of the 1927 Three Choirs Festival procession caught by HMV's microphones in Hereford Cathedral.

Finally, there is a recording of the orchestral version of the *Severn Suite*. This is only the third version for orchestra to be recorded since that that by Elgar with the LSO in 1932. Nearly 40 years ago Sir Charles Groves recorded the Suite with the RLPO and in 1993 Chandos issued Richard Hickox's performance with the LSO. There has been considerable research into the

Suite since 1993 but this relates largely to the Brass and Military Band versions. A new recording of the orchestral version, after quarter of a century, is therefore more than welcome. The CD is recorded in the warm acoustic of Caird Hall, Dundee which is ideal for this music. With the addition of strings the music becomes more nostalgic and enhances the impression that Elgar was looking back over this life in the music. The opening Introduction – a portrait of ‘Worcester Castle’ benefits from the transparency Yates achieves in the orchestra but I could have done with a little more energy on the following Toccata; the excitement of the ‘Tournament’ dissipated, despite the superb woodwind playing. The portrait of ‘Worcester Cathedral’ is beautifully subtle: the music emerging from the previous movement just as if I had entered the building at the end of the day during late summer sunshine. There is peace and time for contemplation before the brass adds solemnity to the end of the movement. ‘The Commandery’ with its memories of music from Elgar’s youth is conveyed as (almost) music from *The Wand of Youth* before the Coda reminds us of the music’s origin as a piece for Brass Band. It is all played magnificently.

A picture of an elegant Spanish lady graces the sleeve of this special release. Within are treasures – some surprising but none of them ‘Spanish’. We are reminded that this ‘Spanish Lady’ was really Ben Johnson’s creation: the heroine’s lover, Wittipol, who disguised himself as the eponymous lady! Nevertheless, she is rather enticing, and I suggest anyone interested in the lesser known works of this ever-fascinating composer allows themselves to be enticed into buying this disc. They will be richly rewarded.

Andrew Neill



**Elgar: String Quartet in E minor, Op 83  
Piano Quintet in A minor, Op 84**

Martin Roscoe, piano  
Brodsky Quartet

Chandos:  
CHAN 10980

The warm and clear acoustic of Suffolk’s Potton Hall embraces this recording of the two large chamber works from 1918. Alas there is insufficient space on a CD for the Violin Sonata which the leader of the Brodsky’s, David Rowland, played so effectively in Malvern in May this year. Precisely eighteen years before the Potton Hall sessions Chandos recorded the Sorrel Quartet with Ian Brown in the same works down the road in the Snape Maltings. The earlier Quartet performance was brisker in each movement whilst that of the Quintet is more or less identical. To avoid endless comparisons, I thought I would use the Sorrell recording as the ‘benchmark’. Coincidentally, Daniel Rowland has retired from this position and his place taken by Gina McCormack who led the Sorrell in the earlier recording.

It is interesting to compare the acoustics of the two recordings. There

is not that great a difference in the sound but, to my surprise, I prefer the Potton Hall which suits the smaller forces of the quartet beautifully. I also prefer the slightly more leisurely performance of the Brodsky’s although the passionate playing of the Sorrells may appeal to me more on another day. Both the Sorrell and Brodsky are excellent quartets, the latter bearing the name of the original dedicatee of the Quartet so it is really a matter of taste which recording to choose. Incidentally, both booklets have excellent notes, the earlier recording by Michael Kennedy and the latter by Conor Farrington.

In the Quartet performance I felt immediately at home as the music began. The performance of the slow movement by the Brodskys, with that wonderful instruction ‘piaevoles’, seems to me so proceed at a perfect tempo and you realise why Alice Elgar loved it so much: ‘captured sunshine’ indeed. The brilliant finale is executed with the right mixture of élan and introspection – that moment when the lower strings play ‘poticello’ (3 bars before Cue 49). Then off we go to that exciting ending which is brought off magnificently. The brilliance of the recording allows each instrument to be heard; the important viola part holding its own.

In the Quintet the extraordinary beginning is balanced between the roughness suggested in the strings and the accompanying piano before the hints of a Spanish influence at bar 78. The contrasts of the movement are maintained through to the end. The sublime Adagio begins with one of the great moments for the viola who has the melody from the opening, the piano meditating on what the strings are playing. There is not much difference between the two performances here. Perhaps Martin Roscoe is a little more assertive than Ian Brown with the Sorrell players but the balance of both recordings leaves this as a matter of opinion. The passionate centre is thrilling in the new recording and the return of the main theme played with great intensity. The Movement ends with great delicacy. The finale is, perhaps, a celebration of life at Brinkwells or the end of hostilities and a look towards a ‘brave new world’. This joy would be compromised by the death of Alice Elgar in a little over a year from the Quintet’s completion. However, this performance and recording seem to capture the excitement in the music of the finale, even as it refers to the mysterious beginning and slow movement.

The commitment of Chandos to the music of Elgar over the years is exceptional bearing in mind the competition from other labels that have arrived since they began forty years ago. The label celebrated its anniversary in June. This recording is as good a way of celebrating this achievement as any and I, along with hundreds of other Elgarians, will be grateful for this latest CD and what I hope will come in the future from Chandos.

Andrew Neill



Albion Records

ALBCD036

**Vaughan Williams: *Suite for Viola and Pianoforte; Romance for viola and Pianoforte, Six Studies in English Folk Song; Fantasia on Greensleeves; Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes; Four Hymns for Tenor, Viola and Pianoforte***

Martin Outram (viola); Mark Padmore (tenor); Julian Rolton (piano)

Unexpected treasures from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society have a pleasant habit of dropping through my letter box, and this latest CD, of his music for viola, is, quite simply, one of the finest recordings I have heard for years.

I first came across Martin Outram more than twenty years ago when I bought the Naxos recording of Elgar's String Quartet and Piano Quintet with Paul Donohoe and the Maggini Quartet, and was totally bowled over by the playing of the violist at the start of the *Adagio* of the Quintet; playing that still moves me to tears. That player was Martin Outram.

Go back to 1964 and you will find me in the Music Department of Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith, listening in wonder as a fellow pupil, Donald McVay, then studying the viola with Bernard Shore, throws off the *Moto perpetuo* from Vaughan Williams' *Suite for Viola* with staggering virtuosity, brilliance and verve. The sound he produced from his giant Tertis model viola, especially within the confines of a school practice room (which also doubled as an indoor cricket pitch – but that's another story of well-spent youth) has remained with me ever since. I have heard the *Moto perpetuo* many times since then, but no-one has even approached the memory of Donald's playing so vividly etched in my aural memory.

Until now. Of course I immediately selected that track, and was instantly transported more than half a century. The 'staggering virtuosity, brilliance and verve' leapt out of the speakers, but with it tenderness, and phrasing of the highest order: supreme musicianship, in fact.

I had not heard (nor even heard of) the *Four Hymns* before, and was intrigued to learn from the booklet notes that they were written for the cancelled 1914 Worcester Festival, and eventually premiered in Cardiff in 1920, by Stuart Wilson and the LSO conducted by the composer, before 'a disappointingly small audience whose size barely exceeded that of the orchestra'. Looking at the draft programme for the 1914 Festival I see they were to be performed by Stuart Wilson on the 'Thursday Evening 7.30 p.m. Symphony in G minor Mozart, New Work – A. E. Brent Smith, New Work – Vaughan Williams, Creation Part 1 Haydn'.

To my surprise I found that Carice had pasted a review of the 1920 concert from the *South Wales News* of 27 May 1920 into a press cuttings album, and, for reasons which will be readily apparent, it is worth quoting at some length here.

Yesterday afternoon, in the Cardiff Empire Theatre, under the auspices of and continuing the Welsh Musical Festival, the London Symphony Orchestra had a concert which proved the greatest fiasco in local musical history from

a point of view of attendance. There has been nothing to equal it since the regrettable feature of the first Welsh Musical Festival on the Exhibition Grounds at the Cathays Park, where there were more persons in the orchestra and the choir seats than in the auditorium.

Yesterday we had the spectacle of Sir Edward Elgar, the greatest figure in British music, and a composer of world-fame, conducting one of his great symphonies performed by a famous orchestra to an audience of a handful of persons lost in an array of empty chairs.

The occasion and the visit of Sir Edward Elgar warranted an official reception on the part of the city, and the homage of local patrons of music, but by mischance or mismanagement the great composer bowed to empty chairs and conducted the whole four movements of his No. 2 Symphony, and the orchestra responded to his will with a precision and an understanding, as though they were playing before a crowded and critical audience.

The first performance of a series of new songs by Sir Edward Elgar to be sung by Norman Allin was announced in the programme, but they were withdrawn, the reason or explanation offered being some difficulty in securing the score.

A feature of special interest was the first performance of *Four Hymns* for Tenor Solo and String Orchestra, by Vaughan Williams, and sung with great care and effect by J. Stewart Wilson.

They are magnificently sung here by Mark Padmore, and splendidly accompanied, as is the rest of the programme, by Julian Rolton. The version with piano accompaniment of both this and the *Suite for Viola* are the composer's own.

The quality of the recording throughout (two venues and two engineers) is equally magnificent, and I can't ever remember hearing a recording where the performers could have been present in my music room. It is a tribute to the work of Eleanor Thomason and Deborah Spanton that one is quite unaware of their presence!

A simply outstanding disc.

Martin Bird



***Elgar's 'Caractacus'****From Barry Collett*

In my review of the new *Caractacus* recording in the last Journal (April 2019) I said I thought that the Charles Groves recording, which appeared on LP in the 70s, had not been issued on CD. In fact it has, on a double CD set from EMI, and it is an absolutely terrific performance! This means that we now have three CD versions of this fascinating work.

***'Beau Brummel' playscript****From Robert Kay*

For those who downloaded the *Beau Brummel* playscript from the Acuta Music website following the review on page 54 of the April 2019 *ESJ*, I have added to the Foreword a summary of the newspaper comments on the music. Anyone who downloaded the playscript before this information was added may now like to download it again. The additional information is contained on pages 8 to 10 of the Foreword: the actual playscript is unaltered although the page numbering now goes "up" by two pages to take account of the extra text.

***Burley and Carruthers' 'Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship'****From Kevin Allen*

Before his death Professor Brian Trowell was planning a much-needed new edition of Burley and Carruthers' *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, working from the original full unpublished typescript. This has since disappeared. In consultation with Mrs Trowell and by kind permission of the Editor, I would like to make an appeal for anyone who has information or suggestions concerning its whereabouts to be in touch with me. Thank you. Mail to: allenkevcar@aol.com

On the 27 March 1905 the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* dedicated a long essay to Edward Elgar (vol. 72, no. 40, pages 760-762). It is one of the oldest and most influential German music magazines. Robert Schumann was one of the founding members in April 1834; the *NZfM* is mainly dedicated to modern music. At the end of March in 1905 the issue contained essays about Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Claude Debussy, Alexander Scriabin, Enrico Bossi and Elgar.

At the beginning of his article, the author Max Hehemann (an advocate of contemporary music who published one of the first books about Max Reger during the composer's lifetime) states that it is difficult to imagine for Germans how a musician 'who has not even written "patriotic" works can receive a knighthood' and how someone 'who has never had a teacher and acquired all his knowledge and skills self-taught' can become a professor. His explanation is that the English nation is proud of Elgar because with his contributions they 'really reached the age of discretion musically'. Hehemann especially refers to works that were also performed in Germany such as *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*. He also makes special reference to the *Enigma Variations*, *Cockaigne* and *In the South*. In this essay Elgar is presented as a 'national English and religious composer'.

**Edward Elgar.**

Von Max Hehemann.

Nicht lange ists her, dass sich in England etwas für deutsche Begriffe schier Unfassliches begab. Man hat dort Edward Elgar den Adelsstand verliehen und ihn sogar, was vielleicht noch mehr heisst, zum Konservatoriums-Professor gemacht. Für seine musikalischen Fähigkeiten ist damit allerdings nichts bewiesen, aber merkwürdig ist die Sache darum doch. Welcher deutsche Fürst würde wohl einem Komponisten, der nicht einmal „patriotische“ Werke geschrieben, das Adelsprädikat verleihen, und welches deutsche Konservatorium liesse sich wohl einen Musikdirektor gefallen, der selbst nie einen Lehrer gehabt und sich sein Wissen und Können als Autodidakt erworben hat? Im Falle Elgar liegen allerdings die Dinge anders wie gewöhnlich. Die Auszeichnungen, die man dem Komponisten verlieh, waren nur der Ausdruck des Stolzes, mit dem die Nation auf ihn blickt. Sie fühlt, dass sie durch ihn eigentlich erst musikalisch mündig geworden und in die Reihe der musikalischen Grossmächte eingetreten ist. Denn mit der englischen Musik war es Jahrhunderte lang sehr schlecht bestellt. Seit Purcell starb und der mächtige Händel nach England kam, verstiegte die schöpferische Ader auf dem Inselreich, und was sich noch als Landeserzeugnis darstellte, war meist nur zweiter und dritter Aufguss ausländischen Imports. Dem Esprit der Franzosen nachzueifern war den Söhnen

von einer Eindruckskraft und Farbenglut vor die Sinne zu zaubern, die zum Grössten gehören, was unsere moderne Musik aufzuweisen hat. An Intimität seiner Tonbilder, mit der er die subtilsten Empfindungen zu erschöpfen weiss, hat Elgar wenig Rivalen, aber auch in der rücksichtslosen Hässlichkeit, zu der ihn oft sein Wahrheitsdrang treibt. Die Dämonenchöre im „Traum der Gerontius“, das Ende des Judas in den „Aposteln“, gehören in dieser Hinsicht zum Kühnsten, was wir besitzen.

Von der Fortsetzung der „Apostel“ darf man wohl wiederum ganz Eigenartiges erwarten, bietet sich darin dem Komponisten doch ein Vorwurf von besonderer Schönheit, wie er gerade Elgars Innerstes zum musikalischen Durchleben wecken muss: Das Vaterunser. Noch eher wohl als der Symphonie werden wir uns dieses Oratoriums freuen dürfen.

*The beginning and the end of Hehemann's essay (see the main part of the essay on the next page).*

Englands versagt, doch unsern Mendelssohn, der gewiss nicht zu den aufregend Temperamentvollen gehört, noch zu verwässern, haben sie gründlich verstanden. Im Gegensatz zu den Mendelssohn-Nachtretern besann sich Elgar auf sein Volkstum und gründete seine Kunst auf dem, was im Volke als uraltes Gut lebte. Er setzte sein Ziel darin, ein wahrhaft englischer Komponist zu sein und als solcher die Sprache seines Landes zu sprechen. Dabei mag ihm sein Lebenslauf und sein Autodidaktentum denn gerade förderlich gewesen sein. Kam er doch zu spät in das grosse musikalische Leben hinein, als dass es ihm noch seine Selbständigkeit hätte rauben können. Ein Kind musikalischer Eltern verlebte er seine Jugend in dem kleinen Broadheath bei Worcester, wo er am 2. Juni 1857 geboren ward. Zum jungen Manne herangewachsen, sollte er sich der Industrie widmen und versuchte es auch ein Jahr damit. Dann aber warf er sich für immer der Musik in die Arme, erhielt nun von seinem Vater Orgelunterricht und lernte dazu noch die Geige spielen. Dies und die in der Jugend empfangenen Klavierstunden sind die einzige musikalische Unterweisung, deren er teilhaftig wurde. Alles andere hat er sich selbst eringen müssen. Einen kleinen Schritt vorwärts auf seiner Bahn bedeutete für ihn die Anstellung als Organist an der katholischen Kirche zu Worcester, die ihn zu mancherlei kirchlichen Gesängen anregte und so seinem Schaffen schon die religiöse Grundnote gab. Als Zweunddreissigjähriger verliess endlich Elgar nach seiner Verheiratung die Heimat und zog nach London. Doch litt es ihn da nicht lange, er ging nach Malvern unweit Worcester und schlug schliesslich seinen Wohnsitz in Plas Gwyn, Hereford, auf.

Worin Elgars Bedeutung für unsere musikalische Gegenwart begründet liegt, ist im Vorstehenden schon angedeutet: wir müssen ihn als einen nationalenglischen Komponisten ansehen, und als einen religiösen dazu und zwar seltsam genug bei einem Sohne Albions, als einen katholischen. Es nimmt sich aus wie ein Spiel des Zufalls, dass gerade in England ein Sänger katholischer Mystik entstand, und doch scheint es das natürliche zu sein. Ist ja der katholische Kultus der anregendere für die Phantasie des Künstlers, gibt er ihm doch reichere künstlerische Mittel, und lebhaftere Vorstellungen als ein anderer. Doch dürfen wir mit Elgars religiösen Werken seine Welt nicht für erschöpft halten. Auch die Erde hat ihr Teil daran, und lebhaft spiegelt sich oft das Leben in seiner Kunst. Bezeichnend genug hat gerade Elgar die Weltstadt in die Musik eingeführt und in seiner Ouvertüre Cockaigne (In London town) das Londoner Leben von seiner glänzenden Seite besungen. Ein Gegenstück, das den Nachtseiten dieses unendlich mannigfaltigen Lebens gilt, dürfen wir noch von ihm erwarten. Auch Italien hat ihn zu einer Dichtung in Tönen angeregt, zu der bilderreichen Ouvertüre „Im Süden“. Freunde seiner nächsten Umgebung sind es, denen wir die Porträtsstücke „Variationen über ein Originalthema op. 36“ verdanken. Kunstreiche Variationen über ein Thema, das selbst ein Kontrapunkt zu einer klassischen Melodie ist, dienen dem Komponisten zu treffenden und oft fein humoristischen musikalischen Zeichnungen. Durch wiederholte Aufführungen ist gerade dieses glänzende Werk in Deutschland ziemlich bekannt geworden. Diese Stücke, — anderer Orchesterwerke, und

solcher, die noch in die Zeit seiner Entwicklung fallen, nicht zu gedenken —, bedeuteten aber nur den Auftakt zu der Symphonie, die seine Freunde schon lange von ihm erhoffen und die erst zum Teil vollendet ist. Gerade sie wird für seine Stellung als Instrumentalkomponist entscheidend sein.

Als Vokalkomponist und Schöpfer grosser Oratorien hat er ja schon seit Jahren seinen anerkannten Platz in Deutschland. Seitdem Prof. Buths in Düsseldorf am 19. Dez. 1901 den „Traum des Gerontius“ zum ersten Male in deutscher Sprache aufführte, hat Elgar Heimatrecht bei uns. Während seine früheren Oratorien, unter denen King Olaf mit seiner kraftvollen Tonsprache und seinem nationalen Kolorit hervorrang, nicht über England hinaus kamen, begründete der „Traum des Gerontius“ Elgars internationalen Ruhm. Der Komponist hatte hier einen ergreifenden Stoff voll wirksamer Gegensätze gefunden: den Todeskampf des Gerontius und das Eingehen der Seele durch das Gericht in die Wonnen des Himmels. Elgars Phantasie konnte sich hier zu einem alle seine früheren Schöpfungen überragenden Werke entflammen, und seine tonmalersische Begabung fand hier die günstigste Gelegenheit zur Entfaltung. Mit diesem Oratorium hatte sich Elgars Stil zur vollsten Selbständigkeit durchgerungen, zu jener romantisch-mystischen Stimmung, wie wir sie in alten Kirchen empfinden, aus denen ein zarter Hauch von Weihrauchduft niemals gewichen ist. Wir finden sie in gleichem, oder gar noch verstärktem Masse in seinem weitem Werke, den „Aposteln“, das zu Pfingsten 1904 auf dem Musikfeste in Köln seine erste deutsche Aufführung erlebte. Die „Apostel“ sind das erste Stück einer Oratorientrilogie, Berufung und Aussendung der Jünger Christi bis zur Himmelfahrt stellen den Inhalt des Werkes dar. Das zweite Oratorium wird dem Wirken der Apostel gewidmet sein, und ein drittes, „Das letzte Gericht und das neue Jerusalem“ die Trilogie abschliessen. Wie im König Olaf macht Elgar in den weiteren Oratorien einen ausgedehnten Gebrauch von Tonsymbolen, die namentlich in den „Aposteln“ Chor und Orchester in reichem Geflechte durchziehen. Sind diese Werke schon durch die verständnisvolle Art, wie Elgar Wagners Errungenschaften für das Wortdrama seinen epischen Schöpfungen anpasst, bemerkenswert, so sind sie es nicht minder durch die durchaus moderne Art der Chorbehandlung. Sie ist ganz aus koloristischen Grundsätzen angelegt, und sucht durch Teilungen in grössere und kleine Chöre und Einzelstimmen dem Chore jede nur denkbare subtile Klangschattierung abzugewinnen. Darüber vernachlässigt Elgar jedoch das Orchester nicht, denn wir haben keine Oratorien, deren Instrumentalpart so glänzend behandelt ist wie der seine. Nicht auf der Höhe ihrer Einkleidung stehen allerdings die Tongedanken selbst, und darin ist Elgar ganz ein Kind seiner Zeit, der die Plastik der Erfindung eines Beethoven und Wagner verloren ging. Er erweckt manchmal weniger durch seine Melodik ein Gefühl in uns, als dass er es durch seine eminente Schilderungskraft in uns erzeugt, und es ist ein besonderer eigentümlicher Zug bei ihm, dass er in der Gewissenhaftigkeit seiner Schilderung der höchsten Steigerung zur „alles sagenden“ Melodie oft direkt aus dem Wege geht, dass der Tonmalers den Tonpoeten nicht zum Wort kommen lässt. Dafür weiss der Tonmalers uns jedoch Bilder

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

At the beginning of May Elgar went to stay with Frank Schuster at the Hut. Alice accompanied him 'in a car to Paddington, a perfect Bedlam, porters dreadfully worried & rude'. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, 'our darling wedding day', Alice was thrilled 'to read of presentation of Allied Terms to Germans at Versailles — German Count Delegate behaved as only a Hunnish brute could behave'. On the 16<sup>th</sup> she and Elgar went 'to Brinkwells by car ... Arrived eventually & found house all open & ready'. They returned to Severn House on the 20<sup>th</sup> in time for the first public performance of the Quartet and Quintet next day at the Wigmore Hall. 'A most tremendous reception of each work & at the end an overwhelming ovation & when E. appeared more than ever. Shouts & roars. A lovely afternoon'. Next morning they drove along 'lanes & elm fringed roads, Chestnut trees in blossom' to Hayes for a day of recording. The 24<sup>th</sup> was Empire Day: 'How can we be thankful enough this day, the Empire preserved in so awful a test. E. sent up the flag early'.

At the beginning of June 'Felix Salmond came up after dinner to try Cello Concerto, sounded beautiful'. He came again on the 10<sup>th</sup>, with 'Windflower' who 'was allowed to turn over, & then later Mr. Reed who stayed to dinner quite enthused with the new work "the only man", he said, "who can write a slow movement". They returned to Brinkwells early on the 13<sup>th</sup> where work continued on the Concerto, 'E. finally revising the beautiful 3<sup>rd</sup> movement — "Diddle diddle diddle". He wrote to Sidney Colvin about it on the 26<sup>th</sup>, calling it 'a real large work & I think good & alive ... Would Frances & you allow me to put on the title page simply 'To Sidney and Frances Colvin'? Your friendship is such a real & precious thing that I should like to leave some record of it'. On the 28<sup>th</sup> they 'suddenly heard Bedham Chapel School bell ring it went for nearly an hour. Concluded the news of signing of peace had come in'. Next morning 'E. put up the flag & it waved royally from a considerable height — Blessed symbol'.

They returned to London at the beginning of July before going to stay with the Speyers at Ridgehurst, where Elgar composed his (very) brief *Smoking Cantata*. They returned to Brinkwells on the 16<sup>th</sup> where they stayed, apart from a short visit to town, until the end of August, visited in turn by Lalla Vandervelde, Salmond, Windflower, and Algernon 'Starlight' Blackwood. On the 30 August, the day Carice 'finally finished with Censorship after 4½ years strenuous work — a splendid record', Elgar went to the Hut, where Lalla was in residence, and found a 'congenial party Bernard Shaw, Francis Toye &c'. Toye recalled that Elgar 'told me how wrong and silly I was to despise Puccini and what a consummate craftsman he thought him. I examined all Puccini's music again, with the result that I came to the conclusion that Elgar was right and all the pundits were wrong. I may add also that in private life Elgar was by no means the pompous old fellow of popular imagination; he was simple, friendly, and, at times, extremely funny.'

Martin Bird

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