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The hoe scrapes earth as fine in grain as sand,
I like the swirl of it and the swing in the hand
Of the lithe hoe so clever at craft and grace,
And the friendliness, the clear freedom of the place.

And the green hairs of the wheat on sandy brown,
The draw of eyes toward the coloured town,
The lark ascending slow to a roof of cloud
That cries for the voice of poetry to cry aloud.

THE songs I had are withered
  Or vanished clean,
Yet there are bright tracks
  Where I have been,

And there grow flowers
  For others' delight.
Think well, O singer,
  Soon comes night.

IVOR GURNEY.

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IVOR GURNEY
(1920)

IVOR GURNEY

THE MAN

HE, Stanford, told me that, of all the pupils who came under him at the College, the one who most fulfilled the accepted idea of genius was Ivor Gurney. He gave me an account of his first appearance at the R.C.M. The Board for the awarding of the Scholarships was in session to hear the candidates in *viva voce*. Parry was greatly excited over Gurney's MS. composition and was pointing out to his colleagues the similarity in idiom and even in handwriting to Schubert, when Gurney was called. As he walked into the room Parry said in an awestruck whisper :

" By God ! it *is* Schubert ".

Those who knew Gurney can well believe it. Totally unself-conscious, untidy to a degree, lost in the clouds, he walked in a poet's dream. His MSS. were in a permanent state of hopeless confusion, a second fiddle part of a string quartet tucked away with the trombones of an overture or maybe not written out at all. He would talk of Schubert by the hour and might have been his reincarnation.

HARRY PLUNKET GREENE. [1]

IN time to come, after the years have assayed our century, songs and poems by Ivor Gurney will still be living, young, beautiful and English. Hitherto only a handful of men and women, mostly artists themselves, have recognized their rare quality. Fewer still are the people who know Gurney personally. The public knows him not at all. Therefore it has been thought well that the critical appreciations of his work gathered together in ' Music & Letters ' should be prefaced by a sketch of his early life. For after all, it is the artist's life which binds together the things of his creating, and neither of them is quite intelligible without the other.

My acquaintance with Gurney began one day in May 1911, when I saw coming toward me along a corridor in the Royal

[1] From ' Charles Villiers Stanford ', by kind permission of Messrs. Edward Arnold & Co.

College of Music a figure which, even in that place of marked individualities, appeared uncommon. For one thing the boy was wearing a thick, dark blue Severn pilot's coat, more suggestive of an out-of-door life than the composition lesson with Sir Charles Stanford for which (by the manuscripts tucked under his arm) he was clearly bound. But what struck me more was the look of latent force in him, the fine head with its profusion of light brown hair (not too well brushed !) and the eyes, which, behind their spectacles, were of the mixed colouring—in Gurney's case hazel, grey, green and agate—which Erasmus once said was regarded by the English as denoting genius. " This ", I said to myself, " must be the new composition scholar from Gloucester whom they call Schubert ".

A fortnight later the same figure entered my room at the R.C.M. He said he wished to join the R.C.M. Union ; gave his name as Ivor B. Gurney, the address of his diggings as in Fulham, and a home address at Gloucester.

He was twenty-one at this time, but still very much a boy in his alternate bursts of shyness and self-reliance. His earliest poems were offered to the R.C.M. Union and Magazine with diffidence. Nevertheless he knew, when he composed the " Elizas " (his five Elizabethan songs) that they were jolly good, and he never rested till he made me see them.

The tremendous hold Gloucestershire had upon his thoughts and affections was apparent from the first. Filial and attached though he was to his parents, one nevertheless felt that Gloucestershire was his foster-mother. Later, in France during the war, he made friends with the French country-folk by instinct, I think, because Gurney and Gloucestershire belong to each other in much the same way that French peasants are united to France, the same families living on the same land for centuries. At times there showed in him a tremendous pride and hawk-like swiftness of temper that suggested some throw-back to a Norman, or even Roman, strain. It could well be, for Gurney is of Gloucestershire stock on both sides. His father David was the seventh and youngest son of a builder and carpenter at Maisemore ; his mother was from Bisley, near Stroud. Ivor, the eldest son, was born at 3 Green Street, Gloucester, on August 28th, 1890. Baptized at All Saints' church, he became a godson of the Reverend (now Canon) Cheeseman from the accident that no one else was present except the parents. The event had far-reaching consequences, among them that of Gurney's introduction to much of the finest English poetry, Canon Cheeseman making the boy read the poems aloud. Gurney's remarkable sense of word-setting may well have been

nurtured by this. At the age of eight he became a probationer and later a member of the choir of All Saints. Later again, in 1900, he went to the cathedral as a chorister. Here he was under Dr. Brewer for music, and a good general education was given him at the King's School. He was a famous solo boy. People flocked to the cathedral to hear the beauty of his voice and the deep musical expressiveness of his renderings. From 1906 to 1911 he was assistant organist at the cathedral. Also (since money was an urgent problem) he contrived to hold a succession of church organist posts, first at Whitminster near Gloucester, then at Hempstead nearer Gloucester, and thirdly at the Mariners' Church at the docks in Gloucester itself. I say " contrived " because with his invincible independence of thought and action, fixed routine of any sort has always irked him. He felt stifled too by the conservatism of a cathedral town. The Three Choirs Festivals brought a welcome change, but even here the prevalence of Mendelssohn oppressed him, so he relieved his feelings by attacking the programmes in a series of brilliant letters to (I think) ' The Gloucester Citizen '. Written under the *nom de plume* " Dotted Crotchet " they made a stir, earned the praise of Mr. Ernest Newman and the righteous wrath of the authorities—especially when the identity of " Dotted Crotchet " was discovered !

Gurney loved books, games and the open air. When but ten, he would read the preface to the Prayer Book during sermons. He was capital at football, keen on cricket, a daring yachtsman. He passionately enjoyed sailing his little boat the ' Dorothy ' on the Severn, and friends who sailed with him still speak with bated breath of the risks he took. Why he was not drowned many times over, no one knows.

Nor do I know at what age he first read Shakespeare and heard the music of Beethoven, but they early became master-passions with him. He was in his teens when one day, deep in Shakespeare as he " minded " the shop for his father during lunch-time, the impulse to compose suddenly came to him—and that was that !

In 1911 he won an open scholarship for composition and came to the Royal College of Music. This was a great emancipation. Lessons under Stanford, and even more the College itself under Parry, opened out a new world. In their queer ways—Stanford stern and Gurney rebellious—they grew fond of one another, while for Parry I. B. G. always had a deep affection.

When war broke out, Gurney promptly volunteered, was rejected on account of his eyesight, worked through the autumn

term of 1914 at the Royal College, wangled his way into khaki, and by the early months of 1915 was in the Yeomanry, where the other men gave him a very rough time. Happily he was soon transferred to the 2/5 Gloucesters and did a year's training in England before going to France with the battalion. Somehow it all suited him, though he cursed the button-cleaning, and a few of the poems in 'Severn and Somme' belong to that time. Then in May 1916 he went to France and had sixteen months there without a leave home to England. Roughly his itinerary was—Laventie Line, Fauquissart, Richebourg, then Reserve and Rest, march to Somme in autumn, Grandecourt, Crucifix Corner (a few miles from Albert), where he spent Christmas, then a short spell in billets at Varennes, followed by a march to the South Somme, a ghastly time in the trenches at Chaulnes, then road-repairing in the devastated region where food failed for days and he grew so weak that at Vermand in a night attack, when he saw a German under a tree just about to shoot him, he could barely fling the bomb that saved his own life. He just did it, but was shot in the shoulder; got six weeks respite at Rouen; and then back to duty.

About this time the poems he had been writing all the year were ready to be offered to a publisher. Mr. Dunhill gave me an introduction for them to Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson. I sent in the book, 'Severn and Somme', and it was accepted at once. To celebrate this I telegraphed the news to Gurney. The wire found him in billets somewhere about Arras. No such thing as a telegram having reached him before, every one leapt to the conclusion it contained bad news! When the truth came out, every one—himself included—was thunderstruck.

From Arras he went to Ypres and came in for the Passchendaele offensive. He had known horrible things on the Somme, but this was infinitely worse; the shambles sickened him to the soul. Then he was gassed and sent to hospital at Bangour near Edinburgh. Many weeks later a piteously thin Gurney emerged, his private's uniform hanging about him like a flag on a pole, but bringing on his short leave two new songs, 'Severn Meadows' and 'The Folly of being comforted'. Then back to the army, renewed illness, and finally his discharge within a few weeks of the end of the war. At the Royal College of Music his scholarship had been kept open for him. He returned there to work under Dr. Vaughan Williams for composition. Strictly speaking his student days ended with his scholarship, but a few words may be added about later times, for he continued to train himself though continually harassed by poverty. Like Gustav Holst he would walk from London to Gloucester

because he could not pay the train fare, and he earned his lodging at inns by singing folksongs. When in London he was often reduced to sleeping at a Rowton House or dossing in some common lodging. Once a thief stole his purse from under his head as he slept, and seeing but a shilling in it, left it by him in compassion. Sometimes he spent the night on the Embankment. One day, ranging the docks, he was arrested as a spy. It hit his sense of humour that the letters in his wallet (which were from Sir Charles Stanford, Dr. Robert Bridges, John Masefield and other eminent men) were pooh-poohed when he produced them to prove his identity. " Stanford—never heard of him. Bridges—never heard of him ", said the police. At last his papers as an ex-service man were found, and they liberated him.

Music and poetry have always meant so much to Gurney that he is prepared to make any sacrifices for them, and often has been too absorbed to notice a sacrifice has been made. When in bitter weather he had to choose between taking an extra shirt or an extra book with him into the trenches during the war, he, being Gurney, chose the book. And when good ideas occur to him, nothing else counts—not even his own safety. In some men this might seem an affectation ; with Gurney it is sheer absorption. Friends have allowed me to quote the following instance. A lady who is herself a remarkable musician and a master of English prose-writing, had invited Gurney to spend the Christmas vacation at St. Ives. Two brilliant scientists who are also expert rock-climbers were of the party. One of them told me : " We went a walk one day out on to the end of Gurnard Head, which is a rocky peninsula on the north coast of Cornwall. On the way Ivor was rather abstracted and whenever we stopped, he lay on the grass, usually face down, pulled out a little long note book ruled with music lines and began to write. When we got to Gurnard Head, ' A ' found a little chimney (*i.e.* a crack between two rocks) which led on to a little place which was otherwise inaccessible. We took I. G. up this, showing him where to put his hands and feet. Then we went back down the chimney and climbed round the rocks back to the grass neck which connects Gurnard Head with Cornwall. We were talking and did not notice that I. G. was not following till we got to the neck. It was then getting dusk. ' A ' and I went back to look for I. G. and finally found him at the top of the little chimney writing in the dark. He had gone back and climbed up by himself, but I very much doubt if he could have got down by himself even if it had been light. We climbed up and brought him back in the dark ! "

But Gurney brought back with him his exquisite song 'Desire in Spring'—a setting of the poem by Ledwidge, which begins:

> I love the cradle songs the mothers sing
> In lonely places when the twilight drops,
> The slow, endearing melodies that bring
> Sleep to the weeping lids. . . .

MARION M. SCOTT.

THE POET

IN a book I recently wrote, there occurred these words in relation to Sir Charles Stanford:

> Stanford knew that there were greater musicians about than himself, and was handsome to and about his abler pupils. He told me that one of them, whom I knew, was perhaps the most promising composer alive. I thought to myself that there was something both of Beethoven and of Mozart about him.

That referred to Ivor Gurney: I didn't mention his name because I was not by way of mentioning my friends without their permission. But it shall be mentioned now.

I have known composers with a fine literary sense and poets who loved music but could neither compose nor play. I have known no man save Gurney who had the double creative gift that Rossetti had in *his* two arts. His poems are few, young and troubled by war; but they are full of the promise of maturity. The practice of the art has made him all the more sensitive to the quality of the lyrics which he set as songs. He has never set bad words; he found good and suitable words amongst the living (for he had the desire to collaborate with the living poets as did the Elizabethans and Lawes and his successors) all too few; to-day he might find them still fewer.

What he might have done in the symphonic way, had he chosen that, I do not know; he has passion, power, architecture and a mastery of composition. I do know, however, having heard so many of them (and most of them, I think, remain unpublished), that his songs are masterly and should be familiar everywhere—from the simple lilting melody he made to Bridges's 'Since thou, O fondest and truest' to the august, forest-haunted, vagrantly modern setting of Edward Thomas's 'Lights Out', which I think one of the finest songs ever written.

I suppose it will all come to light some day. But the best in the arts still have the old struggle.

J. C. SQUIRE.

To many lovers of English poetry, Ivor Gurney's must still be a name unfamiliar, if not unknown. His first poems, ' Severn and Somme ' were published in 1917, ' War's Embers ' two years afterwards ; and although both these volumes are still in print, many more poems than are contained in them remain in manuscript. Certain recent anthologies of verse have included his ' Song of Pain and Beauty ', but he is absent, I think, from those devoted solely or chiefly to twentieth-century verse.

Fashion, even in poetry, may change—for a while ; the war and its immediate consequences was a devouring fire ; but it is nevertheless difficult to account for this comparative neglect. No living writer, in spirit, temperament and imagination, is more English than he—English, that is, with Clare, Hardy, Edward Thomas, with Skelton, even ; and, more remotely, with Ben Jonson and A. E. Housman. And just as the heart beats its continuous refrain in a certain place in one's body, so *his* heart's affection is centred in what is perhaps the loveliest of all the English counties.

In a brief preface to ' Severn and Somme '—a dangerous venture for a poet, but in this case one as happy and characteristic as the flight of a bird to a tree before it begins to sing—he says : " Most of the book " (and nearly all of it was " written in France and in sound of the guns ") " is concerned with a person named Myself, and the rest with my county, Gloucester, that whether I live or die stays always with me " ; but " I never was famous, and a Common Private makes but little show ". There, simple and direct, is the keynote to all his work.

This, however, is only a fraction of the truth. " Myself ", as is the usual way with poets, is certainly everywhere present in his work—free, ardent, generous, intensely aware ; as individual indeed as his own bird-like aquiline face, attentive deep-set eyes, wide brow and long slanting head. But it is a self seldom introspective, and far more intent on the world around it, its life and beauty and humanity—laughing, loving, suffering, daring, enduring; and it brims over with a passion for friendship and a faithful all-welcoming love for objects, common or rare, that have won his devotion.

Although, too, Gloucester, with its men and its unrivalled towns and villages, its hills and woods and meadows, predominates in his poems, London also, and particularly its east and liveliest end —Southwark, Aldgate—hardly less entrances him. He explores

it again and again with a darting and engrossed delight. Fresh and impetuous, opaque at times with mountain silt, often brawling a little harshly and hoarsely over obstructive stones (he has himself referred to his own " roughness " in technique), but forcing their way towards his goal, his poems recall a wild and lovely river ; a river glassing in its quiet waters not only his own intent eyes but everything on its green and sun-bright banks ; and, in particular, all that goes with Spring. And when, with hardly less avidity, he returns to the metropolis, then his verses resemble its river, a Thames always surmounted by his beloved dome of St. Paul's. Only Dunbar indeed among the poets could sing a descant to his fervent solos on " the floure of Cities all ". Above all, he delights in the people of every kind and kin who throng its streets. If only, he pleads for them in his love and compassion, he could share with them his own Gloucester !

Occasionally he may fail as craftsman or artist, for want of patience, because words are rebellious, and because he has so much to tell of, and therefore must assiduously condense the telling—" to say it all out in one word ", was his own poetic ideal ;—but never because the well has gone dry ; never because the fire of his feeling has died down beneath his thoughts ; never because, although bereft for the moment of the requisite skill, his affectionate and sympathetic heart has failed him.

Lyrical poets are seldom ranked according to the range of their subject-matter ; a few even among the finest are in this respect curiously restricted. But if they were, Ivor Gurney would be peering out from well towards the top of the green and golden tree. He has written, for mere example, and not counting ' Solace of Men ', three poems at least hymning tobacco. If he were a painter as well as a poet, he would be a master of skies and clouds. Flower, bird, tree—he not only knows his chosen among them by heart but rejoices to name them. Nor are his flowers solely beautiful or lesson-conscious or merely floral. They may, being nature's too, have crooked stalks and stained and bitten leaves, just as a black cat may have a tuft of white in its tail. He delights in an endearing particularity, refuses abstractions. Every season of the year has been closely, tenderly, reiteratedly lived with, lived into. Music, above all, continually haunts his verse. So too he always names his villages ; rejoices in racy and well-seasoned words ; and can at need be content with " nothing-doing ", " deadest still ", " hush-awe ", and " queer tube " (for a clarinet)—and all these in a few stanzas.

When he speaks of God, he speaks—not as do so many writers, in easy derision of other men's gods—but of his own. And he has his own clear ideal of the poetic impulse :

> Is wonder gone
> The common marvelling at air and sun,
> The taking in to being of Being's essence ?
> Or is the skill of words lapsed deep, too deep ?
> The elemental wonder never lessens,
> Whether with Autumn frost
> Or the Spring's light rain-ghost
> The Summer's passionate or Winter's sullen
> Raining and down-weeping, on the fallen
> Or light showered hanging fantasies of leaves. . . .

With that impulse, he is as intent and imaginative an observer as he is wide-ranging not only in observation but in knowledge ; and not only of nature and mankind but—and no less—of books. Such a poem, for example, as ' The Lock-keeper '—a full-length portrait for which that of the same title in ' War's Embers ' was a sketch—and over four pages long—is pressed down and running over with the best of all human knowledge—that of things at first hand, of natural and living things, *and* of the man himself. Occasionally his poems may be difficult, because the link between thought and thought appears to be missing ; but that is the reason ; not indolence, or indifference to his own intelligence or his reader's. There are songs that only he himself could put to their appointed music. And last—but these are few—there are poems tragic and desperate. But how infinitely less unreasonably so by comparison with the lamentations common in our own day !

> What evil coil of Fate has fastened me
> Who cannot move to sight, whose bread is sight,
> And in nothing has more bare delight
> Than dawn or the violet or the winter tree ?
> Stuck in the mud—Blinkered-up, roped for the Fair.
> What use to vessel breath that lengthens pain ?
> O but the empty joys of wasted air
> That blow on Crickley and whimper wanting me !

The paramount effect on the mind after reading these new poems is a sense of supreme abundance. One has ascended to the top, as it were, of some old Gloucestershire church tower, and surveyed in a wide circuit all that lies beneath it. And then, as with the reader of ' The Dynasts ', one sinks unjarred to earth again ; and all that is now close and precise reveals why the distant seemed so lively, so lovely, and brim-full of grace.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

AMONG the many poets who were rewarded with some notice—with even a photograph in 'The Bookman'—during the world war and the first years after it, one or two from Gloucestershire had considerable claim to be remembered when the special interests of that time had died away. Verse, like all else, is produced in ceaseless profusion and in new modes, but the author of 'Severn and Somme' (1917) and 'War's Embers' (1919) has displayed in his work a "certain liveliness" which remains though the years glide away. Ivor Gurney's lyrics and poetic sketches record the courage and colour of an independent spirit, serving a grim necessity with an indignation speaking through poetry. This force of mind is illustrated in his 'Servitude', a sonnet of 1917 inscribed to the memory of Rupert Brooke, and in the end accepting the position of Brooke's last-known sonnet—but how rugged is the difference of Gurney's reflections from those of Brooke:

> If it were not for England, who would bear
> This heavy servitude one moment more?
> To keep a brothel, sweep and wash the floor
> Of filthiest hovels were noble to compare
> With this brass-cleaning life. . . .

Recent conditions and influences have brought about an upheaval in the forms, rhythms, devices of English poetry, in comparison with which Gurney's work of twenty years ago may appear unprogressive. It did not strike me so at the time. I felt the urgency of a new character among the poets, giving fresh and attractive emphasis to metres that were not in themselves revolutionary. The poet's nature could not but fling a rude strength into what in other hands might have been just easy melody. I still hear the individual note in 'Scots' (1917):

> The boys who laughed and jested with me but yesterday
> So fit for kings to speak to, so blithe and proud and gay . . .
> Are now but thoughts of blind pain, and best hid away . . .
> (Over the top this morning at the dawn's first grey.)

In making the quotation, I am reminded of the author's excellent power of speaking for the ordinary man; for there was a trench catch-phrase, "Stand to, boys, the Jocks are going over", which is the raw material of his poem.

Personal contact with Ivor Gurney strengthened the impression of a free but far from anti-social being, who felt life in terms of melody and song, equally glad to honour it with musical tunes or those of verse. His poems, even when they protest against the tangle of 1914–1918, imply and indicate a proud horizon, and the plain

beauty of farm and stream beneath the lines of the hills and " Heaven's high beauty." In that there is no false placidity, but the stir of an eager and determined mind seizing experience against time.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

THE MUSICIAN

" STAND ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said ' We will not walk therein ' ".

In the history of our art there has always been the good way " the King's highway, cast up by Patriarchs or Prophets, as straight as a rule can make it, the way we must go ". Those who tread this way are not merely blind followers of the blind—not slaves but free ; each one makes his own footsteps on that road and leaves his own impress. Here lies the true originality, the originality of inevitableness.

There are others, it is true, who say " we will not walk therein ", but they seldom find that rest to their souls, that simplicity and serenity which is surely the final aim of all art. Too often they merely avoid the Hill Difficulty and wander into a " wide field full of dark mountains where they stumble and fall to rise no more ".

Ivor Gurney is a pilgrim on the straight and narrow road ; he inherits the great tradition from his master Stanford, who in his turn inherited from Brahms as he from Schubert and then through Beethoven, Haydn, C. P. E. Bach, J. S. Bach, Schütz and Palestrina back to the unknown beginnings of music.

Gurney takes his place as a pilgrim on the great highway at a lucky moment. Most of his songs belong to the years 1917–1920 and are settings of the " Georgian " poets, of which body he is himself a distinguished member. These writers had just rediscovered England and the language that fitted the shy beauty of their own country.

Gurney has found the exact musical equivalent both in sentiment and in cadence to this poetry ; he and his contemporaries have at last discovered that English poetry cannot be forced into the procrustean bed of German, French or Russian musical formulas.

In the bad old days of " Come into the Garden Maud " the composer rode roughshod over the poor poet. Parry and Stanford changed all that, but their musical settings of English poetry with its meticulous observance of accent and stress were apt to be a little

self-conscious. It was reserved for the " Georgian " composers to let their music flow unconstrained and spontaneously into the channels laid down by their contemporary poets.

R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS.

WHEN Ivor Gurney was a boy in Gloucester, thirty years ago, some of his friends had the wisdom to buy him books of poems. Gurney himself had the wit to buy manuscript books at twopence a time at an obscure shop in his own Barton Street. Whoever planned Barton Street (and Gurney would tell you it was the Romans) saw to it that if a poet chanced to live in it he would one day inevitably set his face to the east, walk the street out of existence and find himself at the foot of a lovely spur of the Cotswolds. It was the young Gurney's street : and out past Barton Gates he walked with the singing in his boy's heart that gave us the early songs. In London, in 1911, Stanford and Hubert Parry rubbed eyes over the manuscripts, and spoke of " Schubert ". And when they looked upon the young composer they almost saw the youthful Schubert's double.

Gurney went to London in 1911, his wallet bulging with works of many kinds. There were piano preludes thick with untamed chords ; violin sonatas strewn with ecstatic crises ; organ works which he tried out in the midst of Gloucester's imperturbable Norman pillars. There was, too, an essay for orchestra that strained a chaotic technique to breaking-point. In 1911 he had enthusiasm enough to write anything. In the three succeeding years, and more and more in the ordeal of the war, in London or Gloucestershire, Flanders or Northumberland, his whole creative power turned into the twin channels of poetry and song. From confused and urgent longing, in 1912, to make a cycle of operas out of W. B. Yeats's short plays and Synge's ' Riders to the Sea ' he escaped into the clear issue of his setting of ' Down by the Sally Gardens '. The Moussorgsky-like music-drama he talked of, in 1913, on the subject of Simon de Montfort, went from the mind that later found the ballad of ' Edward ' the true vehicle for his dramatic instincts. Even in song itself he moved rapidly towards the barer essentials of lyrical expression. When, in the Barton Street days, he set Robert Bridges's ' The hill pines were sighing ', the harmonic paraphernalia he employed for the crashing oak was more than he needed for a whole ' Shropshire Lad ' song cycle ten years later. There was, in those intervening years, the simplification that comes with experience and under compulsion of a strong inner urge toward specialization.

Some would give credit to Stanford. But Stanford himself, speaking to me of Gurney, said : " Potentially he is the most gifted man that ever came into my care. But he is *the least teachable* ".

Any half-dozen of the songs will support that qualifying estimate of Stanford's. Gurney has never reached a degree of fine finish or acquired an impeccable technique. The songs reveal a fineness of mind out of all proportion to their quality of detailed workmanship. Sometimes the inequalities are a barrier to a listener's ready approach : a barrier even (one would sometimes fear) between the imaginative and expressive sides of the composer himself. But creative work in all ages is strewn with signs of the struggle-of-making. In Gurney they measure achievement more than they mark limitations. The struggle-in-making is an integral part of expression.

Gurney has written over two hundred songs. For poems he has gone to at least fifty poets. In the days of the twopenny manuscript books I remember settings of Shakespeare, Nashe, Campion, John Fletcher—his " Elizas " he called them. He found English and Scots poems scattered over three centuries, and these he gleaned as any normal Englishman might. But he went outside the school anthologies. The modern Irish poets attracted him—Æ, Seumas O'Sullivan, Padraic Colum, Eva Gore-Booth and, especially, W. B. Yeats. Thomas Hardy and Robert Bridges he knew almost as intimately as he did Framilode, Minsterworth, Birdlip and Cranham and the quiet Gloucestershire places that later went to the making of his own poems. Before the " Georgians " got together in 1912 he had already found out their settable verse. His very finest songs are not only settings of their poems, but they form the subtlest existing musical commentary upon them. His music is a revealing light upon the Georgians—and it is this, and the intimate relationship with their work, that will help to determine the place of Ivor Gurney in the development of English song.

Once in a while a Charles Lamb or a Robert Louis Stevenson nearly succeeds in conveying the sound of a voice through the written word. No verbal miracles can summon or convey the quality of the living sound of music—not even of the simplest musical phrase. Analysis has no power to do it. Nothing I can write here can put you in possession of Gurney. He is not even " exciting copy ". He has preserved not one sensational, eccentric, new-fangled, day-after-to-morrow bar. He is not harmonic " stop-press " news. No discussion of his music can provide opportunity for the gaudy pomposities of " linear counterpoint ", " juxta-position of sonorities " or " tapestry of isorhythmic unities ". From

danger of these he is blessedly safe. He does not write " catchy " tunes. His melody is rarely four-square and patterned—even though ' Captain Stratton's Fancy ' went the rounds of many a prison camp in Germany, and is a tune for plain men to sing.

Gurney's melodic speech is a " kindly " human utterance—as gentle as the outline of the Malverns. But it bestows power to set the seal upon a whole song by its first phrase. In one song after another there lies, in its first sentence, the whole source of ultimate unity. You will find it so in ' The Folly of being comforted ', in ' Here lies a most beautiful lady ' and in the brief and lovely ' Severn Meadows '. Equally he has power to lead tune, as such, to its inevitable final statement—obviously in Yeats's ' Cathleen in Houlihan ', or more subtly in ' Edward '. Gurney's are nearly all " fine songs for singing ". I have walked miles of Gloucestershire ways, with him singing aloud phrases that would go into " the next song ". So many of his melodic lines were born of his walking—and none so engendered will exploit chromatic inflection or live in unexpected leaps. Practically the whole implication of modal thought has passed him by. Once or twice he acknowledges it. ' Hawk and Buckle ' is Dorian until his " major-and-no-nonsense " temper smashes it in the final bars. Sometimes there is a predominant interval in a song. He makes lovely use of the seventh —rising and falling. So did Parry and Elgar. Nothing new in that—nor elsewhere in his melodic outline. Yet it is " Gurney " —as plainly as Elgar's tune was Elgar or Strauss's is Strauss.

His own self is even more in the quality and kind of his modulation. At best it is the rich source of a pervading, wandering beauty in his work. Most plainly it bears the mark of his " unteachableness ". He learned its secret neither in Wagner nor in Prout. Its sum-total in his work is no more assessable than the shadow-quantities that play over a cornfield. It has something of the leisured gradings of the " Unfinished " 's slow movement. Often it is a sober loveliness, as quiet and almost as " fluid " as thought itself. Its subtlety in ' The Scribe ' would make it appear that de la Mare's poem and Gurney's setting are but a single realization of one man's vision. ' Desire in Spring ' is a brief magical procession of scarcely-altered harmonies. Those silences that amount to genius, in ' The Folly of being comforted ', are but punctuation of phrases so finely differentiated harmonically as to appear identical. To any of his intimate friends this gentle and quietly-shifting tonality is the counterpart of much that is Gurney himself. These are his quiet ways. He has others. There is an unexpected shifting of harmonic ground in ' Edward ', so masterly in its placing that it

gathers up the whole horror of Edward's " curse of Hell " upon his mother. In itself it is almost ordinary ; in its context, a startling violence.

In these (and one could quote so many other examples) Gurney finds a moving expressive power. Yet in many of the songs there is something uncompromising and intractable : as if the logic of modulation could be matter for scorn and gentleness of procedure an elegant waste of time. At such times he seems bent upon crushing a rich and complicated harmonic progress into a space too brief to admit clarity. This is something akin to the use of condensed metaphor in modern poetry ; but the compressed analogies of—say—Stephen Spender or Hart Crane are less teasing to the reader than some of Gurney's eliptical phrases are to the listener. His methods in this matter are the more baffling when they apply with complete unexpectedness, as in the quiet stretches of a restrained song like the ' Epitaph in Old Mode '. Tranquillity has to give way to puzzled inquiry.

No lover of these rich songs would pretend that there are no inequalities in them. There are such. In Gurney they are the sign not merely of what Stanford called the " unteachable ", but of something more. They belong to a man who, in his formative years, grasping hugely and generously at the riches of music, was not disposed to worry if many a lovely thing eluded him. As far back as his student days it was his habit to pour out upon any decrepit keyboard the piled-up treasures he had stored in his mind ; and in the process of reproduction his awkward pianist technique made him more and more bent on the big line of a work, and less and less mindful of detail. Something of that keyboard limitation emerges in a few of the songs. In ' The Latmian Shepherd ' there is too thick a texture. In an occasional " ordinary " mood he throws a lovely and sensitive melodic line across a background of figured fussiness. ' Black Stichel ' bears something of the same incubus in its non-stop quaver accompaniment. And the entrancingly " lazy " flight of his melody is sometimes deflected by his fondness for ' 3 against 4 '.

But these inequalities and their like have only incidental place in his music as a whole. They scarcely affect his stature as song-writer. There is, indeed, so much in Gurney that few English song-writers have possessed. It is my belief that not more than five or six since Dowland and Campion have brought to their task a literary perception equal to his. It is direct and experienced knowledge of poetry—the poet's " creative " knowledge—that so often lends beauty and power to his approach. This it is that

enables him so often to find that first engendering phrase of a song. It is this again that enables him to succeed just where most song composers signally fail—in that element of pace-variation which is the birthright of speech and the despair of music-set-to-words. All union of music to words is based on compromise. It is the mark of genius that it does not stress that compromise. At his best Gurney nearly eliminates it. His setting of Edward Shanks's ' The Singer ' is most subtly accomplished in the management of pace. There is no space here to enter into a detailed analysis of Gurney's setting of the lines :

> And the movement of the merry or plaintive keys
> Sounds in the silent air,
> Till the listener feels the room no more
> But only music there.

Such analysis might indicate—what so many of his songs confirm—that the precious understanding of pace-variation within the phrase, or within the stanza as a whole, rarely deserts Gurney. And it might help us to realize in what degree he has brought back to English song that identity of poet with composer which was a glorious commonplace in the time of his beloved " Elizas ".

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PUBLISHED WORKS BY IVOR GURNEY:

Poetry : 2 vols. : ' Severn and Somme ' and ' War's Embers ' (Sidgwick & Jackson).

Song Cycles : ' Ludlow and Teme ', 7 songs for Tenor, String Quartet and Piano ; ' The Western Playland ', 8 Songs for Baritone, String Quartet and Piano ; from ' A Shropshire Lad ' (A. E. Housman). Both published also for Voice and Piano (Carnegie Trust : Stainer & Bell) ; ' Lights Out ', 6 Songs for Voice and Piano (Edward Thomas), (Stainer & Bell).

Songs with Piano Accompaniment : ' Carol of the Skiddaw Yowes ' (Ernest Casson) ; ' Come, O come my life's delight ' (Campion) ; ' I will go with my father a-ploughing ' (Seaosamh MacCattimhaoil) ; ' Since thou, O fondest and truest ' (Robert Bridges), (Boosey & Hawkes) ; ' West Sussex Drinking Song ' (Hilaire Belloc), (Chappell). ' Desire in Spring ' (Francis Ledwidge) ; ' Severn Meadows ' (Ivor Gurney) ; ' The Fields are full ' (Edward Shanks) ; ' The Twa Corbies ' (Border Ballad) ; ' Walking Song ' (F. W. Harvey), (Oxford University Press) ; ' Captain Stratton's Fancy ' (John Masefield) ; ' Edward, Edward ' (Ballad from the Percy Reliques) ; ' Sowing ' (Edward Thomas) ; ' Star Talk ' (Robert Graves), (Stainer & Bell) ; ' Orpheus '* (Shakespeare) ; ' Tears '* (Fletcher) ; ' The Bonny Earl of Murray ' (Old Ballad) ; ' The County Mayo ' (Raftery-Stephens) ; ' Under the Greenwood Tree '* (Shakespeare) ; ' Sleep '* (Fletcher) ; ' Spring '* (Nash), (Winthrop Rogers).

(* Originally designed as a set of ' Five Elizabethan Songs ' with accompaniment for small orchestra.)

Piano Solo : ' Five Western Watercolours ' (Stainer & Bell) ; ' Five Preludes ' (Winthrop Rogers).

TO BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY:

Songs with Piano Accompaniment : Vol. I : ' The Scribe ' (Walter de la Mare) ; ' Song ' (John Davidson) ; ' Bread and Cherries ' (Walter de la Mare) ; ' An Epitaph ' (Walter de la Mare) ; ' Blaweary ' (W. W. Gibson) ; ' A Sword ' (Robin Flower) ; ' The folly of being comforted ' (W. B. Yeats) ; ' Hawk and Buckle ' (Robert Graves) ; ' Last Hours ' (John Freeman) ; ' Epitaph in Old Mode ' (J. C. Squire). Vol. II : ' The Singer ' (Edward Shanks) ; ' The Latmian Shepherd ' (Edward Shanks) ; ' Black Stichel ' (W. W. Gibson) ; ' Down by the Sally Gardens ' (W. B. Yeats) ; ' All night under the moon ' (W. W. Gibson) ; ' Nine of the Clock ' (Robert Graves) ; ' You are my sky ' (J. C. Squire) ; ' Hanacker Mill ' (Hilaire Belloc) ; ' If death to either should come ' (Robert Bridges) ; ' Cathleen ni Houlihan ' (W. B Yeats) ; (Oxford University Press).

The greater part of Gurney's work remains in manuscript