

DRUMS.

By A. M. Hartland-Mahon.

(By courtesy of the Editor "Chamber's Journal.")

The throb of a drum appeals to everyone, young and old, civilised and uncivilised alike, and its power to distract human emotion was well known to the ancients. The story can be carried back to antiquity; and whether in religion, in scene of triumph, ignominy, or bitter sorrow, as a measure of rhythm in music, or in more prosaic use as news-bearer or toy, the drum has literally played sonorous part in our world's affairs.

Regarding its origin, an authority on music believes that a drum was probably the first 'instrument' designed by prehistoric man, and another author thinks that the regular beat of his own footsteps may have led the primitive being to construct an appliance for reproducing those sounds; it is a fact that wild tribes exist to-day that are wholly unacquainted with any kind of musical instrument, yet accompany their lugubrious chant with a sort of drum.

The drum appears in the earliest recorded history, and time-worn hieroglyphic tells of its use in the Egypt of the Pharaohs. 'An ancient drum (one and a half feet high and two feet in diameter) with two curved handles was found in the excavations at Thebes in 1823, but perhaps the primary Egyptian types were the 'Tar,' a kind of tambourine, and the 'Darabukkeh,' which is in use to-day. Sir William Lane describes an old Egyptian drum made of wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and such an instrument is played in the harems. The Ethiopians attributed the drum to their god Thot, and seriously believed that he brought it to their land in the first year of the creation of the world.

Mention is made in the Bible of an instrument of percussion known as the 'Toph' or 'Tabret.' This was a sort of tambourine belonging to the 'drum' family—of which several varieties were undoubtedly appreciated by the Hebrews—and it was played by the women on joyful occasions; its descendant shares in similar Eastern festivities of the present time.

Drums were employed by the Greeks and Romans in their worship of Baccus and Cybella, and the kings of ancient empire favoured a famous diversion called 'The Dance of the Gods,' in which drums of all sizes joined issue. There is a record of a Greek hand-drum, the 'Tympanum,' which in the year 396 B.C. inspired the Spartan youth in war dance.

To turn to the Orient, Naumann says that the Chinese show distinct predilection for all instruments of percussion, a preference which he holds to be indicative of a low musical organisation; yet, however that severe remark may apply, China certainly knew the drum before the days of Confucius. A giant type, 'Hieun-Kou,' is said to have enlivened the imperial palace in the year 1122 B.C., during the dynasty of the notorious Tcheou; other small drums were suspended from its august sides, and it rested upon a special stand. It is the custom to-day in Peking to sound curfew on a monster bass-drum; and of the many patterns in use, one Chinese rattle-drum, called the 'Too-Kou,' is shaped like an hour glass, and beaten at each end with sticks. There is some impressive ritual—connected with Omens—which is observed in their joss-houses or temples, and demands that a drum shall be beaten unceasingly from dusk until dawn. No one who has heard it can forget that deep solemn note everlastingly repeated with clock-work regularity in groups of three taps, and on a still night the monotonous repetition catches the ear miles away; the feeling is almost uncanny.

Indian drums have no less claim to antiquity, and there are many models, of which the 'Tabla' appears to be favourite; but it is by no means easy to play, and it takes years of practice to become really proficient. Another popular native drum of the kettle-drum description is the 'Tam-Tam' or 'Nakkera': it is not unpleasant in sound and is generally found in the bands of the temples.

As a medium for conveying information, it is incontrovertible that drums have been known in Africa for centuries. By a system of pre-arranged tapping, news is swiftly passed by drum from clan to clan across the vast continent, and it will reach the interior of the country with almost the speed of a telephone. The Bakwire, a tribe of the late German Cameroons, possess a curious drum-language of their own, which the women and slaves are not allowed to learn.

Again, history is clear that the Franks used drums in A.D. 778; and in the Battle of Roncesvalles. Roland summoned the great Charlemagne to his aid by means of drums and horns. The Moors are credited with bringing the first drum to Spain, and the Roman imported it into England. But our ancestors do not seem to have accepted it generally until the time of the Crusaders, who again most probably encountered its bellicose effect on the fanatic mind in the Holy Land. Drums are shown in quaint

woodcuts of 1540; 'Drumbs' or 'Drumslades' are mentioned in many old English records; and we read that in 1676 negotiations for slaves were conducted by drum (however that may have been accomplished). 'Drumming the town' is a very old method of promulgating the current news in our realm, and a grim use was found for drums at executions, as also in their employment as a surgical accessory to the travelling dentist of that day. Keen intellects may remark on the analogy between modern painless dentistry and our forerunners' sagacity in effectually drowning a patient's observations under treatment. In the same decade, the term 'John Drum' was applied to a rough reception, such as turning an unwelcome guest out of doors.

To revert to harmony, drums are here classed under the three well-known types—side, bass, and kettle drum. In the Middle Ages the performances of strolling players included an item in which a small side-drum, called a 'Tabor,' was accompanied by pipes; the show was known as 'The Whittel and Dub,' and old prints illustrate the implements and their artistes. It may be noted that on the capital of a column in Beverly Minster five minstrels are represented, one of whom is holding a 'Tabor' and pipes. The work is ascribed to the reign of Henry VI., when minstrelsy was on the decline.

Although it has no real place among musical instruments—other than the expression of musical modifications of time—the drum stands in regard to music in much the same relation as metre does to poetry. The kettle-drum may perhaps be an exception, in that it can be tuned to the pitch of the band; for instance, the note of King Henry VIII.'s silver state kettle-drum is clearly recognisable. Berlioz, the great composer, was the first to discover this drum's value in orchestral effect, but it is said that it took him many years to learn the possibilities. Auber's overture to "Masaniello" cannot be played satisfactorily with fewer than three kettle-drums, as it requires the notes G, D, and A, and there is no time to change the G or the D drum into A. Meyerbeer used four such drums in "Robert le Diable"; and Gossek—in a funeral march written at the death of Mirabeau in 1791—introduced a 'Tam-Tam' or small Eastern drum. Besides their pronounced usefulness for forte passages, drums are capable of really beautiful piano effects if well played; Beethoven first saw their utility as solo instruments, and in the Andante of his Symphony No. 1, the drum contributes a whole bar.

Side-drums came into usage in the Middle

Ages, and were of Turkish origin; but they were not extensively employed in our army until late in the sixteenth century, or by the Germans until the beginning of the seventeenth century and through the Thirty Years' War. As a military accessory for signs and calls, where the bugle now takes their place, drums first appear to have done good recruiting work during the Napoleonic wars. Drumming a defaulter out of a regiment is still an ordeal of the present day, and 'Drumhead' court-martial is the war prototype of the peace tribunal.

In the superstitious ages drums were accredited with supernatural powers, and Baxter speaks of 'The Drumming Well of Oundle,' where, before an momentous event, a drum could be heard beating from the centre of a disused well. Dodsley also refers to the belief of the country-folk in the properties of that well, and it has been said that a drum beat a roll in another well in Smithfield for two whole days and nights before the death of Charles II. Legend runs that St. Patrick drove the venomous reptile out of Ireland by vigorously beating a drum; he generated such fervour that a hole was knocked in it (thus vastly endangering the miracle), but an angel appeared and mended it.

A reputation for magic and divination among the Laplanders is of very early date, and an old history contains the description of a curious divining drum employed by their wizards about the year 1577. It was oval in shape, made of wood, about a foot high, and four feet long, and the surface consisted of fine white reindeer skin. A number of suitable charms were hung to its sides—tufts of wool, bones, teeth, claws, etc.—and the surface was divided into spaces; one was reserved for the celestial gods, one for the terrestrial, and one for man; and various figures and signs were drawn therein, introducing the god Thor, Christ and the Virgin, and the Holy Ghost. An 'arpe' or divining-rod was laid on a definite spot and the drum then flayed with hammers; the sages then drew certain valuable conclusions from the position taken by the 'arpe.' Any worthy Laplander who had attained manhood could in ordinary difficulties consult the drum for himself, but in abstruse matters the professional wizard was called in.

Famous 'Drake's drum' is as the heart of west-country chronicle, and before the last Great War it is said to have been heard faintly beating across the wild moors of Devon. Its resolute promise of help from that valiant mariner compares strangely with an old historians grave deposition that the Scots actually frightened the

soldiery of Edward III. with their drums! Froissart, in describing the entry into Calais in 1347, says, 'ils font si grand noise avec grands tambourins . . .', so perchance intimidation by such means may have been another peril of those days. Without any connection being suggested, it may be noted that a very formidable assembly of drums commemorates the battle of the Boyne in Ulster huge processions on 'the 12th of July.' Truly a great day!

These brief notes reveal the drum as an active participant in scenes of infinite variety in every part of the globe and from all time, and imagination surely reproduces the story of disaster undying heroism far more vividly in its ghostly reverberations. Whether in brilliant pageant, in doom, or as the plaything of children, the drum certainly holds precedence as the widest known and oldest 'instrument' in the world.

27th INNISKILLINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 1842.

In the last two issues of the "Sprig of Shillelagh" in 1925, two short articles appeared under the above heading. They gave an account of how a certain detachment of Inniskillings, under Captain T. C. Smith, a Peninsular veteran, were besieged at Congella, near Durban, and were eventually relieved after a gallant resistance.

The following cutting, referring to the affair is taken from "The Rand Daily Mail," from which it appears that the beleaguered garrison owed their salvation to a settler named Dick King.

SIEGE OF DURBAN FORT.

Most people have heard of the famous ride of Dick King from Durban to Grahamstown, a distance of six hundred miles, in ten days. But it is not everyone who knows why he rode.

In 1842 a detachment of British troops, under Captain Smith, a Peninsular officer, was besieged in camp at the place where the old fort now is, near Greyville, by a commando of Republicans. For in these days Natal was, of course, for a short few years, a Republic. Dick King, a settler, volunteered to take the British Commander's despatch on horseback to the Cape, in order to get assistance, and he succeeded. During his absence the troops were hemmed within earthworks, on the outside of which was placed the military wagons, some sixty in number. This continued for a month—the investment being ended on the 26th June of that year on the arrival of a relief column by sea from the Cape.

Captain Smith, during his spare moments, whilst vigorously refusing to surrender to the enemy at the most readily surrendered himself to the poetic Just a week before the relief he sat at his

tent door at 11 o'clock one night and wrote a poem which he called "The Southern Cross." The last verse—there are many of them—reads as follows:

But who that gazes on the skies,
Thus tranquil and sublime,
And feels his soaring spirit rise,
Can think of strife and crime?
Strange contrast! Death is on the earth,
Heaven beautiful, as at its birth;
When that old anarch, Time,
Was youthful, and had just unfurled,
His pinions on a new-born world.

Apparently the artistic temperament was well developed in the old warrior, as he also seems to have recorded the appearance of his camp with brush and palette. Possibly owing to the fact that he had a month within which to complete the picture—in fact, at the time he did it he could not have known how long a time he would have had, as it depended either on relief or on rations—he thought he would do three water-colour portrayals of his position, one for his old regiment, one for the Houses of Parliament, and the third to remain in the country which occasioned the attempt. So he did. The one that remains to us here—it is in Durban—can scarcely be called a work of art, though it is obviously a faithful reproduction of the scene. The tents in the centre—the cumbrous old tent wagons of that day round them—the light ramparts so hurriedly cast up when he knew he would be besieged, and in the foreground a number of red-coats (the 27th it was, the Inniskilling Fusiliers) and near by camp followers and other people.

[Note.—It would be interesting to know what became of the portrayal destined for the Regiment.—Editor.]

ORDERS FOUND IN AN AUSTRALIAN MACHINE GUN POSITION.

1. This position will be held, and the Section will remain here until relieved.
2. The enemy cannot be allowed to interfere with this position.
3. If the Section cannot remain here alive, it will remain here dead, but in any case it will remain here.
4. Should any man through shell shock or any other cause attempt to surrender, he will remain here dead.
5. Should guns be blown up, the Section will use Mills Grenades and other novelties.
6. Finally, the position will be held as stated.

The above speaks for itself and is typical of the indomitable spirit of our friends in Australia.

LONDON GAZETTE.

Capt. E. E. J. Moore is seconded for service as officer of a Company of Gentlemen Cadets, Royal Military College, 3rd February.

Capt and Bt. Major R. G. S. Cox, M.C., is restored to establishment, 3rd February.

Capt. L. Gilbert, M.C., 5th Batt. 10th Baluch Regt., from Inniskilling Fus., Dec., 13th, 1926.