

"HOME, SWEET HOME" MUSIC EPOCH SHOWN IN MAKING AT EXHIBIT

How Work of Genius Grew Told at Library of Congress.

BY CHARLES E. TRACEWELL.

Those who may be interested in seeing how a work of genius grew have opportunity to do so at the Library of Congress, where there is now installed an exhibit of material relating to "Home, Sweet Home," that immortal song which is as fresh to-day as it was on May 8, 1823, when first given to the world.

For "Home, Sweet Home" was a growth, and any one who will climb the marble stairs at the Library of Congress—the last set of stairs—and walk directly down, will find himself in the aisle where the exhibit is located. And there he will see prints and scores showing the birth and growth of the famous song, whose centenary is being celebrated throughout the world this week.

Two years before the song was first sung in "Clari, or the Maid of Milan," an opera by Henry Rowley Bishop and John Howard Payne, the melody appeared in a volume, "Melodies of Various Nations," published in 1821 at London. It was given as a Sicilian air, but as a matter of fact had been composed by Mr. Bishop, later to become Sir Henry. The song in that old book was called "To the Home of My Childhood," the words being written by one Thomas Bayly. The melody, be it remembered, was exactly the same as that universally known today as "Home, Sweet Home."

And the words—well, they were well enough in their way, but the same sort of thing that had been done many times before, and were to be written many times since—just ordinarily well written verse, lacking that stroke of genius which John Howard Payne, the American, put into the song when he wrote the new words two years later.

Here is the way the early words ran:

"To the home of my childhood
in sorrow I came
And I fondly expected to find
it the same—
Full of sunshine and joy, as I
thought it to be
In the days when the world
was all sunshine to me;
Those scenes were unaltered
by time, and I stood
Looking down on the village
half hid by the wood;
That happy abode, where I
us'd to possess
A father's affection, a mother's
caress."

Then there comes stanzas about the friends of his childhood being all gone and that sort of thing. Thomas Hood did it much better.

Song Hit of "Clari."

Then, right along side in the case, may be seen one of the first printed copies of "Home, Sweet Home," the great "song hit" though that term was unknown in those days—of the latest opera, "Clari."

"Mid pleasures and palaces,
though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's
no place like home."

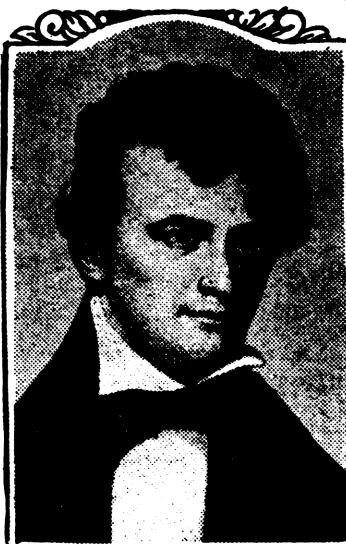
The hand of genius had touched it—a great song had been born, one that was to sing its way triumphantly out of an evanescent opera, the rest of whose music was mediocre, and go on singing its way down the years, bringing sweet impressions of peace and happiness to the people of all races.

Yes, it was the old melody, and the old idea about "home," but it was in reality a new song, one of those inevitable things in which the world of music happily abounds, a song of which no note can be changed with verses from which no word can be elided without loss.

Is Work of Art.

"Home, Sweet Home" is that strange, ever-new creation, a work of art, a folk song which is true music, with simple words that fit the notes so well that all the world has sung the result since.

In looking over the manuscripts



JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

and prints in the "Home, Sweet Home" exhibit at the Library of Congress the visitor will realize as he perhaps never did before the credit, which belongs to Sir Henry Bishop. In this country about all one hears is that "Home, Sweet Home" is by John Howard Payne.

But Bishop wrote the music. When he first put it out, in the collection of melodies, he ascribed it to Sicily, but later admitted that he wrote it, as he did many of the "Swiss airs" and other "airs" in the volume.

Is Good Tune Still.

It was a good tune in that first collection, and it has remained a good tune ever since. Payne's words clinched its place in the heart of the world. When it first appeared in the opera it actually occupied the place that a modern "song hit" holds in a frothy musical comedy.

"Clari" was written around the melody. It was incorporated in the overture, sung in the first act as we know it, reappeared later in 6-8 time, and then in 3-4 time later in the progress of the piece. It is, of course, in 2-4 time, that beat which may be either a rousing march or tender lullaby, according as played in strict time or rubato.

Payne Wrote Libretto.

John Howard Payne wrote the entire "book," or libretto, of the opera, and original copies may be seen at the library exhibit. He was at that time engaged in dramatic work in London for the Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theaters. The prototype of the opera was pantomime and ballet, which Payne had seen several years previously in Paris. Such things were then very popular in the French capital. As a matter of fact, Payne first wrote a play around the pantomime, but later he and Bishop co-operated upon the opera.

It was not long after that first performance at the Covent Garden Theater on the night of May 8, 1823, that "Home, Sweet Home" began to be popular. An edition of 40,000 copies was sold the first year, and some authorities make it 100,000 copies, but that is probably an overestimation. Pirated editions were sold in America and perhaps these sales did make the count 100,000 copies.

It is a strange thing that none of the American editions, of the song contained the name of John Howard Payne. While the English editions bore both the name of the composer of the music and the writer of the verse, the American editions contained only the name of Henry R. Bishop. Payne's native land knew him not.

Legend Is Untrue.

The legend sometimes heard that Payne was ill used by the English publishers is thus seen to be untrue. The original documents may be seen at the Library of Congress exhibit, with the English editions bearing Payne's name and the American editions showing only the name of Bishop.

The first American presentation of the opera was given November 2, 1823, at the Park Theater in New York. (A picture of the theater is



MARIA TREE



SIR HENRY R. BISHOP.

in the local exhibit.) It is a curious thing that in none of the advertisements of the song in this country was the melody "Home, Sweet Home" mentioned.

Bishop was really a first-class composer, although the great bulk of his work was destined for oblivion. He wrote more than 100 operas, hundreds of glees, popular in his day, and melodies to songs from Shakespeare. "Lo, Here the Gentle Lark" is well known today, with its delicate flute obligato and lovely melody, a sparkling flow of song. Hundreds who know it on the phonograph records little realize that the man who wrote its lilting strains also composed "Home, Sweet Home."

Engravings of both Bishop and Payne are included in the Library of Congress exhibit, which was put in place by Carl Engel, chief of the music division of the Library. There also may be seen engravings of Maria Tree, who sang "Home, Sweet Home" in the original production, and of Catherine Stephens, who helped make it popular throughout England and Ireland.

There is a photograph of the first two pages of the original manuscript of the song, which recently was sold to Hiram W. Sibley of New York for \$1,580. The melody, it may be remarked, was sung by Clari, in the first scene of the first act of the opera.

Bishop's handwriting may be seen in an original score of a cantata. It is a free, flowing hand, one which would be expected from such a dashing looking fellow. The three engravings of Bishop are much unlike, one of them showing him to look like a pirate, but the other two depicting him as a handsome gallant, with wavy hair. He has one distinguishing feature in all three engravings, however—a very large nose.