

## INEBRIA MUSICA.

**D**O not allow the title to scare you. It has no connection with "Arabia Deserta" or any weighty matter of that kind. True, Doughty's fascinating narrative was in my mind when the title was hatched, and it may be that the parched air of Arabian deserts did suggest an opposite; an Elysium, indeed, where liquid matter was in superfluity. I found it in a tramcar.

Enter the inevitable drunk man—singing. He sits down beside a gloved gent who, judging by his appearance, might have his home in Giffnock.

"An' hoo are ye gettin' on, mister, eh?" Glacial silence.

"I was askin' ye hoo ye were gettin' on." The gloved gent, suddenly struck by the architectural beauty of Eglinton Street, looks out of the window.

"Deef! deef's a doorpost—ah, weel—things maun aye be some wey. As I was sayin' to Jake, a man's no' drunk till he canna lie on the ground without haudin' on by the grass; noo that's plain enough, isn't it, eh?"

The benevolent gent opposite nods approval.

"Gie's yer haun! I like folk to be sociable; thae deef anes miss a lot o' the fun—eh?" To the conductor—"My ticket, did ye say? Noo, I wad like to ask ye a question. Hoo can I hae a ticket when I hinna paid my fare? Had ye that time, lad—eh?"

He sings, "We are no' fou, we're no' that fou." "A bit heich, I'm thinkin'. Ah, weel, it disna matter; ye canna aye strike the right key. But here's yer penny, my lad! Dagont! This string's aye comin' aff my parcel; ye see it's a bid cod I'm takkin' hame to the wife."

The benevolent gent opens his newspaper nervously.

"Ah, weel, if ye're no' gaun to speak to me I'll jist need to gie ye a bit sang, as Rabbie said."

And that brings me to the subject matter of "Inebria Musica," the sub-title of which might be "Songs most favoured by Gentlemen in their Cups." There are four songs which stand supreme. "Logie o' Buchan," "Mary o' Argyle," "Mary," and "Annie Laurie." I regard "Logie" as the best, not on artistic grounds, but because a drunk man may, with a bit of luck, work his way through to the bitter end and be as drunk as when he started. It has no rhythm to talk about, and a halt here and there may be rather an improvement. There is just one hurdle—that rise of a sixth in the opening phrase. This surmounted (a hiccough has been known to be helpful) and the song may be said to sing itself.

"Mary o' Argyle" is sterner stuff. That minor section in the second part is the snag. The drunk man who can manipulate it is simply not drunk. The hardest hearted policeman would cheerfully help him on to a tramcar.

"Mary" is a much safer choice. I refer to the "Kind, kind and gentle is she" Mary. Care must be taken not to start it too high, otherwise the "tender blossom" which soars to the high doh may be in danger of finding itself in the clouds rather than "on the tree." It is wise to omit the second section. You will remember how, from the dominant, it rises first a sixth, then a seventh, and finally a fifth. Nasty! To be at sixes and sevens is bad enough; with fives thrown in, it is too much. But the first part of the tune may be made a truly moving thing. I once saw a Mosspark man accompany himself delightfully to the song by using the garden railings as a harp. He kept admirable time and

did not halt until he reached his own door. Music, you see, may be a very present help in time of trouble.

Of the four songs, however, "Annie Laurie" is at once the crux and crown. Right away it jumps an octave. Of course, there are states of inebriety when an octave does not matter. But one cannot be too careful. It must be remembered, that while it is no offence, legally, to be drunk, it is an offence to be drunk and incapable. I admit "Annie Laurie" is effective, and I grant you that the "lay me doon and dee" part can be done with striking verisimilitude, but —. Mention of "Annie Laurie" reminds me of a touching incident which happened long ago in an East-End Church hall.

It was a Saturday evening temperance meeting, half lecture and half concert. A decent old lady had wandered in from the Gallowgate. She occupied a front seat and was in that delightful condition known as "sleepy fou." The singing she applauded heartily; the lecture was beneath her notice. She slept fitfully. The lecturer was loud in voice and manner. Periodically he worked himself up to a somewhat artificial climax, which he capped by giving the table a resounding thump. It was at these periods that the wisdom of the old lady shone forth. Starting up, she uttered in a dismal and contemptuous drawl—"Ach, shut up, man; gie us 'Annie Laurie'!" And that lecturer had eventually to shut up.

I never knew the old lady's name. She must be dead, for what I relate happened nearly thirty years ago. An unknown hero! Grey-haired and tattered, single-handed and against great odds on that night of nights she fought and won a battle for music.