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CHOIR TRAINING

A. MADELEY RICHARDSON

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TO THE HON. A. PERCY ALLSOPP,
With grateful memories.

M

CHOIR TRAINING

BASED ON

VOICE PRODUCTION

BY

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A. MADELEY RICHARDSON

M.A., Mus. Doc., Oxon.; F.R.C.O.,

ORGANIST AND DIRECTOR OF THE CHOIR OF ST SAVIOUR'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH, S.E.

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PART I.

FORMATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CHOIR.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

1. How can we improve our Choirs? This is one of the most prominent questions at present before the musical and ecclesiastical worlds. The days are long past when there was any question as to the desirability of choirs and musical services. All parties, however great their differences on other matters, now agree that music ought to hold a foremost place in the Services of the Church; and that worship is offered in its highest form in the Choral Service. Admitted that a Choral Service is desirable, it follows that, to be a worthy offering, it must be the best procurable by the means at the disposal of those responsible; nothing less can be acceptable within the Church's walls. How obvious this seems. And yet there is a hardly defined feeling in the minds of some devout people that there are dangers connected with a highly artistic musical Service; a dread that gain in musical culture may mean loss in other directions; that worship may degenerate into a mere outward formality without true spiritual life: though these same people would probably be shocked at the idea of offering in the House of God anything but the best in other forms of art. Would anyone maintain that a badly painted picture would be more likely to aid devotion than a good one, or that we ought to have feeble architecture, poor sculpture, &c.? No! in all other branches of art, nothing is considered too good for the House of God. Then, if music we are to have, it should be the most artistic, as perfect as it can be made with the material we have to use.

2. Highly trained choirs have been objected to on the ground of a supposed interference with congregational singing, which is by some regarded as the ideal way of worship. Into the question of congregational singing it is not our purpose to enter here; but it will surely be admitted that a congregation singing with a good choir is preferable to one in company with a bad choir. And if it is supposed that good singing implies of necessity elaborate music which must exclude the congregation, we enter a protest against any such idea. The smallest things are worth doing well. It is just the simplest parts of the Service that, as a rule, need most attention, and these are unfortunately the parts that are least frequently well rendered. At present too much is thought of *what* music is to be performed, and too little

of *how* it should be sung. The aim should be to have simpler music, well rendered in every detail; then, there would be less of the assertion that a good choir excludes the congregation.

3. It is of course essential that if a choir is to set an example in the way of singing, it must do so in all other matters connected with worship. Sad indeed is it to see a choir, after perhaps singing beautifully, show by their behaviour that their thoughts are anywhere but where they should be. A choir that behaves badly defeats its own object and does more harm than good. Valuable as singing is, it would be better to have a plain read service than one most artistically rendered accompanied by carelessness and irreverence. Let a choir be taught that, as the object of their music is to bring home the meaning of the words they use, so the words ought to truly represent the thoughts of those who use them—or else, all is vain.

4. Every adult choirman should be a Communicant, and should be expected to enter into the Church's life, and realise that in Church the choir are worshippers, and that for this they are present.

5. How shall we improve our Choirs? we ask. What are their defects? What the remedies? The answer to these questions may be summed up in two words—Voice Production; teach this, and our choirs will soon approach perfection. How often do we hear choirs singing elaborate music, in time, in tune, with perhaps correct expression; but the tone! Where is the soft full pure tone that should characterize boys' voices? Only heard in very few places; it would perhaps be safe to say that their number might be counted on the fingers of both hands. Yet this true production might become the rule rather than the exception if only our choirmasters were able to teach their choirs in the right way. Without teaching Voice Production, all choir-training is futile. It is erecting a building without a foundation; colouring a picture without first sketching its outlines.

6. This applies more forcibly to the singing of boys than that of either men or women, as in any body of the two latter it may be presumed that a certain proportion will have already studied singing, and the good sense and taste of others will prevent them committing the grosser errors. But with a body of boys it is different. The average boy neither knows nor cares anything about Voice Production; his one idea is to make as much noise as possible, and in this, unfortunately, he is as a rule only too successful.

7. It is thought by some that it is unnecessary and useless to attempt to teach production to a choir; that some voices are good, others bad; and that beyond teaching time, tune, &c., there is no more to be done. Nothing could be a greater mistake! Of course, there are some voices here and there exceptionally strong, clear, and sympathetic—obviously these should be trained for solo work. But we maintain that all voices

can by teaching be made more or less beautiful (except in cases of natural deformity), and this is an easier matter with boys than with adults, as the former have not lived long enough to confirm bad habits as the latter may have done.

8. Others think that, though in the abstract it is desirable to teach production, with boys it is a task of such difficulty that it is a useless attempt. To these we would say: "It is a difficult task, but by no means impossible. It has been done, and can be done again; with perseverance the difficulties will vanish."

9. It is not every one that will make a good choir-trainer. Certain qualifications are absolutely essential. A choirmaster must be a good disciplinarian; he must possess unbounded patience, unfailing energy, and indomitable perseverance; also an even temper, a kind, quiet manner, a cheerful disposition, and a delicate and accurate ear.

2.

THE CHOIR-ROOM.

10. Whenever possible, have a room specially set aside for practice; not too large, but lofty and well-ventilated. The boys should all face the same way. They should be divided into two groups, corresponding with the Decani and Cantoris sides in Church, and should be so arranged that the choirmaster can see all faces at the same moment. For a large choir, a good plan is to distribute the boys into two or three rows placed one behind the other, each row being raised on a platform with a step, about eighteen inches higher than the one immediately before it, and with a gangway dividing the rows exactly in the centre. The choirmaster should be seated in front at a pianoforte, facing the singers. Behind each row should be placed chairs on which to sit occasionally; and before each row should run a sloping desk, on which to rest the music, the ledge being about 40 inches from the floor, and tilted at an angle of 45°. This height will suit the taller boys. For shorter ones, hassocks can be provided to stand upon, so as to bring their eyes to a level with the music.

11. Where it is not possible to have the rows raised from the floor, they may be all on the same level, and the pianoforte and choirmaster may be on a platform of a corresponding height; but, for obvious reasons, the first-named arrangement is the best. In any case the chairs and music desks are essential, and let no one attempt training boys without them. Sometimes the two sides, Decani and Cantoris, are made to face one another as in church; but the objection to this is that the boys, being able to see into one another's faces, a good deal of mischief and inattention may arise, which, with the other arrangement, is impossible.

12. The pianoforte is an indispensable adjunct to the practice room. A small pianette is sufficient, with pleasant tone, and

well in tune. The instrument should not be incessantly used, but is necessary for testing the pitch, and is of great assistance in teaching new music. The advantage, however, of making a choir thoroughly accustomed to singing without an instrument cannot be too strongly urged; it gives a confidence and self-reliance that can be obtained in no other way, and these qualities are the foundation of musical expression.

13. A blackboard and chalk are further necessary for the room, and with such obvious necessities as pegs for hats and coats, cupboards and shelves for music, we are ready to start.

3.

THE CHOIR.

14. Frequent practices should be held. When possible, the boys should be taken every day of the week except one, which should be regarded as a holiday; and the men should attend twice, once for practice alone and once for full practice, which latter should be regarded as the summing up of the others; a time for emphasising what has been already taught rather than for learning anything new.

15. The full practice should be held in church, all other practices in the choir-room. At the former, every member should be in his own place, under conditions as nearly as possible similar to those on Sundays. For the full practice, it is an advantage to have a second pianoforte wheeled into the centre of the chancel, where the choir-master should always stand. For an inefficient choir, the pianoforte is indispensable; but when a high standard has been reached, it is much better for the choir-master to rely on simply a tuning fork and a bâton. *On no account should the organ be used for choir practices; all it can do is to cover up and obscure deficiencies*, which is just what a good trainer does not want. His object should be to show up defects and correct them, not to blur them over. We repeat, that there is nothing like singing without accompaniment to give a choir confidence and decision; and when singers can render any given work unaccompanied, there need be no fear for them when the instrument is added. The organ can then fulfil its proper office of enhancing and extending the general effect, when not trammelled by the necessity of leading and supporting the singers.

16. In selecting boys, when, as is usually the case, only ordinary raw material is procurable, more attention should be paid to the appearance of the boy than to the sound of his voice. It is well-nigh impossible to judge from a first trial how a boy's voice will turn out. Very frequently the most unpromising at first hearing will prove the best after training. An accurate ear is necessary, though it is wonderful how the ear can be trained, and very often a seemingly incorrect ear is simply caused by

nervousness or bad habits. In selecting boys, then, take the ones whose appearance you like. Do not take delicate boys; do not take sulky boys; nor those that appear silly and careless. Choose those that are bright and intelligent, strong and healthy; and look out for a well developed chest and throat. By all means hear their voices, but be guided chiefly by appearance.

17. As to age: do not take boys too young. Remember that a boy's voice is like a rose; for a moment it blossoms out to perfection, then is gone. Just before it breaks is the time for a boy's voice to be heard; that is, as a rule, at the age of fourteen. Though nothing is more uncertain than the exact time it will last. The writer has known boys of nineteen with voices unbroken; others go at about thirteen. An experienced choirmaster gets to know instinctively, by the look of a boy, how long his voice is likely to last. A quick-growing boy will lose his voice early; a boy of late development will retain it much longer. Still, as a rule, the age of breaking is between fourteen and fifteen, other times are the exception. The best age to commence then is, in general, between ten and eleven. Boys taken younger will often force their voices in attempting to rival their seniors, and thus do more harm than good.

18. This brings us to a difficulty that besets almost all choir-masters of parish churches. We have seen that it is necessary to have as many boys as possible as old as fourteen or fifteen. In most places where the choir is taken from the humbler classes, it is just at this age that the boy is sent to "work," and the choirmaster is informed that, in consequence, he proposes to leave the choir, the reason given being either that he considers himself too old for the choir (now imagining that, as a wage-earner, he is already a man) or else that he is tired of the choir's work, boys being, as a rule, sadly fickle and volatile creatures, without an atom of perseverance. Now unless there is some remedy for this, the choirmaster's efforts will be thrown away, as these elder boys are the ones he must secure if he is to do really good work; one boy of fifteen being worth half-a-dozen of eleven or twelve as far as voice is concerned. The only way to make the choirmaster independent of these difficulties is for the boys to be well paid, on some system that will prevent their leaving without permission.

19. The best way to attain this object is by a plan of deferred payment, which will work as follows: Let each boy receive a small amount as pocket money (say, 3d. a week); this will secure regularity of attendance, and from it can be deducted fines, to strengthen discipline. In addition to this weekly amount, let a further sum be reserved for each boy, varying according to age and ability, from, say, 1s. a month upwards; put aside on the distinct understanding that it will only be given if the boy remains in the choir until his voice breaks, or else leaves with the permission of the choirmaster. The amounts so reserved

may be written down on a table to be hung up in a conspicuous place in the choir-room, so that each boy may see at a glance how much he is entitled to at any particular time. It is important to make this arrangement quite clear to the parents when the boys join the choir, explaining that those who leave before their time will only have the benefit of free teaching, whereas those who remain to the end will, in addition, receive a bonus of a good round sum. To avoid any misunderstanding, it is best to have a printed form for the parents to sign accepting the arrangement. There are other methods by which the same result can be gained, but the above is the simplest plan and will be found to work well.

20. In regard to the adult members of a choir, the opinion is gaining ground more and more that, whenever possible, they too should be paid, however small a sum. As Sir John Stainer so tersely put it in his speech at Exeter a year or two ago, "the only valid reason for having a voluntary choir is inability to pay one." The argument that a man who accepts money for singing in church will, *on that account*, look upon the work as a matter of business only is, when examined, an absurd one. If it were sound, it would apply to the clergy, organists, vergers, and other paid workers, who are becoming more and more numerous every day. Certainly the choirman should look upon his work as a matter of business—*i.e.*, as work to be done with all the punctuality, accuracy, and assiduity of business; but this feeling need have no effect upon the religious tone of a choir, if by example and precept they are constantly shown the right way. To do good work, a choirmaster must be able to insist on perfect regularity and discipline, and experience shows that these can never be permanently maintained in a voluntary choir. Frequently individuals will be found willing and ready to make the choir a first consideration, but these are only individuals; no large body of men can be made to look upon things in this light permanently. Therefore, we say, pay them; secure regularity and discipline first of all, then proceed to inculcate other things. The object of payment should not be to secure the best voices apart from other qualifications. Very often a person possessing a fine voice may be quite unsuitable for a choir on other grounds. Considerations of character should weigh quite as much as vocal ability in selecting for a choir; but, having selected your members, then it is essential to bind them down to their duties. Therefore, we say again—pay them.

21. As to balance of voices. It is well-nigh impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules that will serve for all cases; so much depends upon the strength and quality of the voices available. For general purposes the following may serve as a guide. First as regards the three lower parts. Of course, the very smallest choir will consist of two voices to each part—*i.e.*, of one representative on each side. To increase this, we would recommend twice the number—two to each part each side; then

add an extra bass each side, an extra tenor, after that one of each part, finally an extra bass. Thus:—

(1.) Six voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
1 Alto.	1 Alto.
1 Tenor.	1 Tenor.
1 Bass.	1 Bass.

(2.) Twelve voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
2 Altos.	2 Altos.
2 Tenors.	2 Tenors.
2 Basses.	2 Basses.

(3.) Fourteen voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
2 Altos.	2 Altos.
2 Tenors.	2 Tenors.
3 Basses.	3 Basses.

(4.) Sixteen voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
2 Altos.	2 Altos.
3 Tenors.	3 Tenors.
3 Basses.	3 Basses.

(5.) Twenty-two voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
3 Altos.	3 Altos.
4 Tenors.	4 Tenors.
4 Basses.	4 Basses.

(6.) Twenty-four voices.

<i>Dec.</i>	<i>Can.</i>
3 Altos.	3 Altos.
4 Tenors.	4 Tenors.
5 Basses.	5 Basses.

22. The boys should be considered differently. If (a) they are of good age and (b) thoroughly trained, let their number equal the sum of all the other voices—*e.g.*, for our first choir we should want six boys; for our second, twelve; for our third, fourteen, &c. When, however, (a) there is a large proportion of young boys, and (b) it is not possible to give them very frequent practice, the number should be largely increased; to double what we have said, if possible, or to as many as can be obtained under

the circumstances. It must be ever remembered that age and frequent practice make all the difference in the *strength* of boys' voices, apart from any question of quality, &c.

23. Here we come to the matter of probationers, needful to keep up a constant supply of boys. There should be a definite number of these extra children; say, equalling a fourth of the number of regular choristers. Let them attend all the practices (remember we do not want them too young) and sit in a special place in church, where they will not be much heard, but where they will feel that they are of some consequence. Give them all copies of the music, and it is a good plan to let them wear cassocks but not surplices; the latter being the garment of dignity, marking the full chorister. Pay these juniors a small sum, and at practice place them, not all together, but between other experienced boys; in this way they will soon learn without requiring much special attention.

PART II.

VOICE PRODUCTION FOR BOYS.

24. Having now arranged our room and secured our choir, let us make a start with the boys and teach them something of voice production.

25. The first thing to consider is the *management of the breath*. Whole treatises have been written on this important subject, and many conflicting theories advanced. Without wearying the reader with long discussions, we will state briefly what we believe to be the correct plan. The lungs can be inflated from above (clavicular breathing), from the sides (lateral breathing), and from below (abdominal breathing). To secure a full inflation, these three methods should all be used in conjunction, beginning from the bottom of the lungs (the diaphragm), and gradually filling upwards until the chest is reached. While the breath is being expelled from the lungs, the upper chest should not be allowed to fall until all the lower part has been emptied, so that the pressure upon the larynx may be exerted from the diaphragm. And the reason for this is, that all hard and heavy pressure upon the larynx must be carefully avoided, which can only be done by taking the force from the soft muscles of the diaphragm, instead of from the hard bones of the chest. Further, it is important to avoid forcing the larynx upwards and thus tightening the throat, deadening resonance and inducing "throaty" tone. When the will is directed towards delaying the fall of the chest bones, the result will be that the larynx will tend to fall in the direction in which the former are inclined.

26. In teaching boys, two points should be emphasised:—

- (1) The lower part of the lungs should be well expanded.
- (2) No force should come from the chest.

27. A good method of breathing is the very foundation of all successful singing, and, quite apart from other considerations, the better the breath is controlled, the better will be the tone of the voice. Insist upon the rules that:—

- (a) As much breath as possible be taken in.
- (b) As little as possible be let out.

28. Singing being the sustaining of sound as distinguished from speaking, which consists of short and disconnected tones, much more breath is required for the former than for the latter; and until the ability to take and retain it has been acquired, a singer can make no real advance.

29. Besides insisting constantly upon deep breathing during singing, in teaching boys it is an immense advantage to have

some accurate means of testing the progress of each individual from time to time.

30. This can be done by means of

THE SPIROMETER.

Having assembled all the boys together, find out the capacity of the lungs of each by means of this instrument, and take note of the same; then tell them all to practise breathing gymnastics at home during a given time, say three months, at the conclusion of which they will again be tested, and the one who has made the most progress will receive a prize. The boys will be immensely interested in this process, a large majority will do the breathing exercises with great diligence, and, besides the one who receives the prize, all will benefit by the practice.

31. The exercise should be a simple one, as follows: Direct a full breath to be taken through the nostrils, while the body is held in an erect position and lightly clad, so as to allow the lungs full play. Let the breath be retained as long as possible, and then slowly ejected through the mouth, while the lips are held together, and only allow a very thin stream of air to escape between them; continue till all the breath has been ejected, and then commence again and repeat the process six times. The exercises should be performed once every day, in the morning on rising. This, then, together with a constant insistence on deep-breathing while singing, will soon make a vast difference in the tone of the choir; and any teacher adopting such a plan will be well repaid for the extra trouble it involves.

32. After considering the breathing, the next point is *the position of the body* when singing. Insist on boys standing (a) upright, (b) with the shoulders thrown easily back, and (c) the arms at rest by the sides. It will now be seen how advantageous it is to have a proper music stand (§ 10), so that the arms may be free. If one or both hands be constantly required to hold up the music, the result will be unnecessary strain upon the muscles, which should all be left free for tone production.

33. Also, it is a good plan to teach boys to beat time when practising, which cannot be done if the music is held in the hands.

34. Insist then on two things:—

(1) Left hand down.

(2) Right hand beating.

35. The head should be thrown well back; so far, that if standing against a flat wall, the back of the head would just touch it. The chin should be kept down, and on no account protruded forward.

36. We are now prepared to commence singing. Let us consider the way in which *vocal tone* is caused.

37. The sound is generated by the vocal cords, a pair of delicate lips, situated in the larynx, which, being tightly held together and set in motion by the pressure of the breath, produce synchronous vibrations—in other words, vocal tone; the pitch of

the sound depending upon the weight of the lips and the tension with which they are stretched. For a full account of their structure and action the reader is referred to any good work on vocal physiology—*e.g.*, “Voice, Song, and Speech” (Browne and Behnke).

38. It is the function of the vocal cords merely to generate the sound, its volume is mainly determined by the form and substance of the parts of the body which it sets in vibration, and the amount and shape of the air enclosed in the various cavities of the mouth, &c. If the larynx could be removed from its natural surroundings and the vocal cords then set in vibration, the result would be only a feeble buzzing sound, quite different from vocal tone.

39. Above the vocal cords, in the upper part of the larynx, is a second pair of lips, commonly called “the false vocal cords”—more correctly, the “breath controllers.” We must pause to consider what is their use and how to secure their correct action.

40. If the reader is in doubt as to where these lips are situated, let him take a full breath, and, after holding it a moment, whisper sharply any vowel sound, avoiding vocal tone; the result will be a distinctly felt explosion at the commencement of the sound, and this is caused by the lips in question suddenly opening to release the air after having been tightly closed.

41. Let the reader next sound a vowel with vocal tone, thus bringing the vocal cords into play, and compare its effect with the whisper. It will be plain that the tone is now generated lower down.

42. The vocal cords proper are very delicately constructed, and their work is to set the expelled air in vibration, not to govern its egress; for this latter they are quite unfit, and if it is forced upon them the effect will be disastrous. All outgoing air should be controlled by the breath controllers, and, in properly managed voices, it always is; but owing to the exigencies of language, this natural function is frequently usurped by other organs. Let us see how this happens.

43. Words are composed of vowels and consonants, the former are musical tones proceeding from the vocal cords, the latter are noises of various kinds, caused by a complete or partial stoppage of the outgoing air passing through the mouth. The consonant “P” is made by completely stopping the outgoing breath by the lips, and then suddenly allowing it to escape, thus causing a sharp explosion. “T,” “CH,” and “K” by doing the same thing with the tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth, at the front, middle, and back respectively.

44. Every time one of these consonants is sounded the breath is completely stopped or controlled at that particular point; and the breath controllers of the larynx, not being then required, will remain at rest.

45. But in a language like ours, where the consonants are so numerous, and so little attention is given, in ordinary conversation, to pure vowel tone, the real breath controllers in many cases get hardly any employment, and in consequence become weakened and sometimes entirely lose their power of acting in a proper way when required. With an ordinary talker then, who is musically uncultivated, the mouth in speaking is kept almost closed, consonants follow in quick succession, and so the egress of the breath is being continually checked and a balance is maintained. But tell the same person to open the mouth and sing a vowel alone, he will at first feel quite helpless; the breath rushes through in an unimpeded flow, being no longer checked by consonants, and the true "controllers" being in a state of partial disablement from want of employment. A poor, feeble, unmusical tone will be the result.

46. Often enough, though, the throat, finding itself thus, as it were, thrown on its own resources, will make an effort to stay this unwonted flow, and may do so in two ways; either by a contraction of the pharynx causing "throaty" tone, or by the descent of the soft palate with the uvula, causing "nasal" tone. Directly the breath is controlled, in the proper way, at the larynx, these two evils will disappear, and in the majority of cases a pure vocal sound will be heard.

47. We have entered at some length into this question, as it is at the outset of the greatest importance for the choirmaster to understand it. Remember that "husky" tone, "throaty" tone, and "nasal" tone are all caused by an inadequate control of the breath at the proper point, and may be without much difficulty cured in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. "Husky tone!" This most objectionable fault (only next to "throaty" and "nasal") is caused, as we say, by the same want of control, only that here much more breath is allowed to pass than is required for tone production; and, instead of being impeded in a wrong way, it is not impeded at all, and so escapes through the mouth, causing a dull, dead tone. This brings us to the question of—

48. **ATTACK**, which is, in fact, involved in all we have said. Correct "attack" takes place when the tone starts at exactly the same time as the emission of breath, and is secured by the explosion at the breath controllers with the initial vibration of the vocal cords. *The result must not be a jerk, but simply a clear start of sound*; the ear must judge when this has been acquired. Avoid the two extremes of a husky tone and a jerked tone; but if the former proves obstinate, it may be cured by leaning in the direction of the latter; just as to straighten a crooked stick, you bend it in an opposite direction.

49. When, as we shall see further, a proper course of training is kept up with exercises on vowel sounds only, it will not be necessary to say much on this matter to boys. Tell them to

keep the larynx* low—this gives a better chance to the breath controllers—and insist upon clear, pure tone.

50. Occasionally an obstinate case will appear. Take this boy separately, and instruct him to practise privately an exercise for reviving the disused parts. This may consist of the breathing exercise already described, only substituting for the emission of breath through the closed lips, a rapid repetition of a whispered vowel, with the mouth open, commencing each time with a decided click at the point of contact. This will probably soon put things right. †

51. We have seen that the vocal cords can only *start* the tone, its volume will depend upon the action of other parts of the body.

52. It has been truly said, that in singing, every portion of the frame is brought into play and assists in the production of tone. And further than this, the voice of a singer will be affected by the substance upon which he stands, and also by the size and shape of the surrounding building. There is music in all nature. Every substance is ready to vibrate to musical tone. Every particle of air has its own voice to utter if it can meet with suitable environment. Take an illustration. Strike a tuning fork, hold it in mid air, and listen: a faint humming note will be heard. Press its stem, while still vibrating, against any solid substance, as a table or a chair, and immediately a clear tone will ring out, its strength depending upon the elasticity of the solid substance. Strike the fork again, this time hold its vibrating ends over any empty vessel (as a jar or bottle); if no reinforcement of the tone takes place, reduce the bulk of the enclosed air, by gradually filling the vessel with water; at a certain point the tone will be suddenly increased; but if the filling process be continued, it will again be reduced in volume until it dies away. Notice that in the first experiment the resonance does not depend upon the size and shape of the vibrating substance—any substance will answer the purpose, provided it is elastic; in the second, however, it is necessary that the column of air should be of a certain definite size and shape to reinforce the tone, and for any given note only at one point will the resonance take place.

* We would not recommend the use of a scientific term like this when teaching a mixed class of boys. Speak of the "throat," and point to the place you mean. That will be quite sufficient.

† Perhaps no subject connected with Science or Art has given rise to more discussion and differences of opinion than the action of the vocal organs in singing. No two theorists agree on all points, and at every step we are met with contradictory views, often supported by weighty authority and apparently sound arguments on both sides. Among the theories that have given rise to acrimonious discussion, none have been more hotly contested than the principle of breath control here set forth. The writer states what he, from observation and experience, believes to be true, though he is fully aware that his views will be met with opposition in some quarters. For arguments on both sides of the question the reader is referred to Lunn's "Philosophy of Voice," to Browne and Behnke's "Voice, Song, and Speech," and to "Mind and Voice," by J. Barnard Baylis (Bosworth and Co.).

53. Here we have the principle of the structure of all musical instruments, the vibration either of a solid substance or of imprisoned air, and they may be roughly divided into these two classes. All stringed instruments belong to the first class and all wind instruments to the second.

54. With the human voice, the resonance is of both kinds; it is a summing up of all instruments; it resembles all, yet it resembles none; in it is contained the completeness and perfection of musical tone—hence its glory. Hence its beauty.

55. The resonance we have chiefly to deal with is (of the first class) that caused by the vibration of the bones of the chest and head and (of the second class) that caused by the air enclosed within the cavities of the throat and mouth. For the first, we must secure a connection between the source of vibration and the solid substance and see that the latter is free to vibrate; for the second, we must insure that the bulk of enclosed air corresponds with what is required at any given pitch.

56. Before proceeding farther with this question, we must pause to consider the *material of language*—vowels and consonants. What is a vowel?

57. It may be defined as “a modification of an original quality of tone, proceeding from the vocal cords, caused by the position of the tongue and lips.”

58. If the tongue is allowed to lie flat in the mouth, and the lips are held well apart, the sound of *Ah* will be the result. This is the great central vowel, the stem from which all other vowels branch out. These are formed by either (*a*) closing the lips or (*b*) raising the tongue.

59. If the lips are gradually closed the following series will be produced, “Or,” “O,” “OO,” the last being the closest vowel sound.*

60. If we return to “Ah,” and, instead of closing the lips, raise the middle of the tongue gradually, we pass through the following: “Er,” “A,” “E,” the last being the thinnest vowel sound it is possible to produce.

61. Other arrangements are possible: for instance, to produce the German “ü” the tongue is raised *and* the lips closed—in fact, a combination of “E” and “OO.” But we are now concerned with the vowels of our own language only.

62. In addition to the seven long ones already mentioned, there are six short vowels—“ö,” “ö,” “ä,” “ü,” “ë,” “ï,” produced by a widening at the back of the throat, and these thirteen sounds include all the possible variations of vowel tone in the English language. We give a diagram of the same with key

* It must be noted that for the sound of “OO,” besides the closing of the lips, the tongue must be raised at the back; but this does not affect the argument—the closing of the lips is the essential part of the vowel.

words. The exact sound of the vowel can be identified by singing the key word, first as written, and then repeating it without its consonants.

63. Diagram of Vowels :—

Position of tongue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Position of lips	○	○	○	◌	◌	◌	◌
Long vowels	OO	O	Or	Ah	Er	A	E
Key words	hoop	hope	hall	harp	hurt	hate	heat.
Short vowels	ö	ö	ö	ä	ü	ë	ï
Key words	hood	hot	hat	hut	head	hit.	

These are the single vowels. There are also four double vowels which are produced, not by a new position, but by a combination of two of the foregoing :—

			Key words
(1) I.	=	A'h + i . . .	(high)
(2) OI.	=	O'r + i . . .	(boy)
(3) OU.	=	A'h + ö . . .	(how)
(4) U.	=	i + OO' . . .	(huge)

It will be observed that, in the first three, the accent falls on the first part; in the last, upon the second part. In singing, the unaccented part must be *very lightly touched just as the note finishes*. Ignorance of this rule frequently causes odious errors of pronunciation.

64. If we look again at the table of long vowels, it will be noticed that, taking "AH" as the centre, the third from it on either side (viz., "O" and "A") are, in spoken English, usually terminated with the fourth on either side respectively, and so become double vowels. Thus: "Ó+OO," "Á+E." This is quite unnecessary in singing and should be avoided.

65. The short vowel "Ü" requires special attention; it is frequently indicated by the consonant "R," when it is called "the vocal 'R'" (as in "fear.") In such cases, when followed by a word commencing with a consonant it should be treated as a vowel and not rolled. When followed by another vowel a slight roll is necessary.

66. The consonants of our language may be divided into—

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1) <i>Explosive.</i> | (3) <i>Mixed</i> (smothered vocal tone). |
| P. b. | M. |
| T. d. | N. |
| Ch. g. (<i>soft</i>). | Ng. |
| K. g. (<i>hard</i>). | L. |
| (2) <i>Sustained.</i> | R. |
| F. v. | Y. |
| Th. th. (<i>soft</i>). | W. |
| S. z. | (4) <i>Aspirate.</i> |
| Sh. sh. (<i>soft</i>). | H. |

67. Our concern is at present chiefly with vowels, as these are the musical sounds. The consonants are necessary to convey thought, but all real vocal tone lies in the vowel sounds. Our preliminary training should, therefore, be confined to vowels, the consonants being added when the tone has been formed. This will be obvious when it is remembered that a certain definite arrangement of the parts of the mouth is required for every particular vowel at any given pitch, and directly a consonant is introduced this arrangement is upset. When, however, by constant training the singer has become accustomed to producing pure correct tone, the upsetting effect of the consonant will not so much matter, as the force of habit will insure a return to the correct position as soon as the consonant has been sounded.

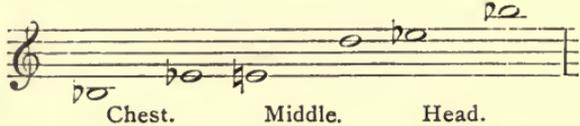
68. Here we must revert to the question of Resonance, and consider it in connection with Pitch and Vowel quality. In listening to a correctly produced voice, it will be noticed that the quality is not the same throughout its entire compass. The lower notes have a clear penetrating tone partaking somewhat of the reed *timbre*; the upper notes, on the other hand, are full and round with a distinct flute quality; the middle notes have an intermediate colour.

69. What causes this variation? Not any difference in the vocal cords—they do not change; but the different ways in which the tones are reinforced at various pitches—the different methods of resonance.

70. The treble voice may be roughly divided into three parts: the lower, in which the resonance depends mainly upon the vibration of the chest bones, hence called "chest voice";* the

* These old-fashioned terms, as describing the actual sensations experienced in singing, are more convenient for teaching than the terms "thick register," "thin register," &c., used by some, which, based upon the action of the vocal cords at varying pitches, though perfectly intelligible to the teacher who has mastered the subject, are confusing and often misleading to the learner.

middle, where the air enclosed within the cavities of the mouth mainly reinforces the tone, called "middle voice";* and the upper, where the bones of the head are brought into play, called "head voice."*

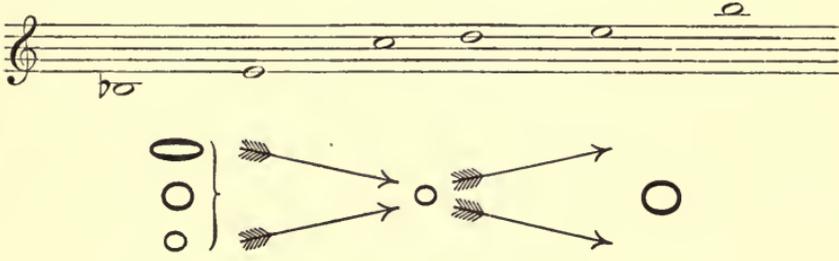


71. It must be clearly borne in mind that, though as a guide to teaching these divisions are useful, they must only be taken as approximately accurate; and (1) it is possible to extend any register up or down considerably beyond the limits indicated; (2) in a well trained voice no break should be heard anywhere; it ought to be impossible to tell exactly where one register begins and another ends.

72. Now for the lower notes, the resonance depending upon the chest, we can produce a good tone with any position of the lips, consequently all the vowels can be used with equal ease, as in speaking; for it must be remembered that the speaking voice is almost invariably low-pitched, as compared with the singing voice.

73. When we reach the middle notes, we depend for resonance upon the air enclosed in the mouth, and this, as we have seen in our experiment (p. 19), must be of a definite shape to reinforce any given note; the more air we confine, the better and fuller will be the tone. Therefore, the lips should here tend to close and become rounded, thus causing a modification of some of the vowel sounds.

74. As we ascend the scale and reach the head register, the lips must again part and make as wide an opening as possible. Here is a diagram showing the most favourable position of the lips for vowel sounds at varying pitches:—



Let these positions be insisted upon for all practising upon vowel sounds.

* See note on previous page.

75. The part that will give most trouble is the middle, and we must remember that in any given piece of music the majority of the notes will be written there; it is the exception when we go very high or very low; the middle part, then, will require the most careful attention. Remember that the cavity of enclosed air must be *tuned* to every note by the opening or closing of the lips—the effect of opening being to enclose *less* air and of closing to confine *more*.

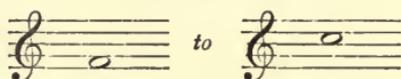
76. We must aim at obtaining the maximum of tone with the minimum of effort. This will be secured when the tone is centred against the roof of the mouth, just behind the upper teeth. Here the vibration must be distinctly felt; the tone being as it were, “focussed.”

77. To find out the true focus, the simplest plan is to use an exercise employing alternately the smallest and the widest opening of the lips (*i.e.*, OO and AH), and so we are bound to pass through the correct position; when this takes place, the pleasurable feeling of finding the note “fixed” will induce a return to that position, and by constant repetition the pure tone will in time appear with ease and certainty.

78. For teaching boys the following exercise is invaluable:

OO. AH. OO. AH. OO. AH. OO.

To be repeated on every semitone from—



In singing this, let the teeth be fixed apart with a small piece of cork,* about three-quarters of an inch thick, held lightly, not pressed. This is necessary to avoid any closing of the teeth for “OO,” which will otherwise invariably happen with an untrained singer. The “OO” sound should be made to approach that of “ÖÖ” (as in pull) to avoid a contraction at the back of the throat, which will be induced by the former. The exercise must be sung very softly, and may be taken slowly at first, afterwards gradually increasing the speed. Let this exercise precede all others, and be reverted to again and again throughout the practice. After this, we can take exercises over the whole compass of the voice.

79. Here we must enquire what is the compass of boys’ voices. Boys’ voices vary like women’s; there are contraltos, mezzo-sopranos, and sopranos—low, medium, and high. The boy contralto is a rarity, the usual voice being either the second or third.

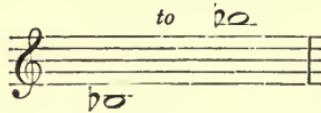
* The pieces of cork may be cut from a solid block, but trouble will be saved if small corks are purchased at a corkcutter’s. They can readily be obtained just the size required.

80. There is considerable difference of opinion as to whether boy contraltos should be employed in choirs as altos, or whether this part should be taken by adults only. We are strongly in favour of the latter arrangement. It is sometimes urged that male altos are scarce, and in some cases cannot be obtained at all. The male alto is, however, an artificial voice and can be made. There are plenty of baritones who could sing alto if trained, and we recommend that when none ready-formed present themselves, the choirmaster should take some young men who have served their time as choir boys, and start them as altos. The male alto, though not often effective as a solo voice, is very useful for purposes of harmony, and blends admirably with boys' and men's natural voices.

81. If boys are used for the alto part, the difficulties of training are enormously increased. To train boys thoroughly well, it is necessary at the ordinary boys' practice for the choirmaster to give his whole attention to the treble part; this cannot be done if some of the boys are singing alto at the same time. The only really satisfactory plan would be to take these latter separately, thus placing a double burden upon the choirmaster's already well-laden shoulders.

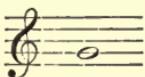
82. We advise, then, that when a boy alto appears, he should be trained with the trebles; his voice will serve for most of the treble part, and will be a useful addition when the music is written low.

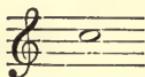
83. The usual compass of a boy's voice is

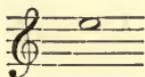


many boys can sing  with ease, but almost all can easily be trained to B flat.

84. The voice production exercises then should cover the two octaves indicated, special attention being given to the middle part, after that to the upper. They should be sung to the vowel AH, with modifications, as shown in the diagram (p. 23). When

singing the note  slightly close the lips; continue the

closing as the pitch rises until  is reached, when the

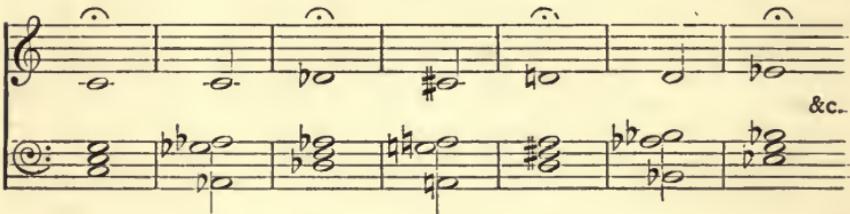
lips should be well rounded as in singing "OO." For 

the opening must be again increased, as in singing "OR," and so

continue to the highest note. Remember that the chin must always be held well back, the larynx as low as possible, and all the muscles of the throat kept loose and unconstrained.

85. In order to keep up the interest in the exercises it is well to introduce as much variety as possible. Do not go through exactly the same routine at any two successive practices, but keep introducing some change.

86. Vocal exercises for boys can be founded on variations of three figures—(1) the octave, (2) the arpeggio, and (3) the scale, passing through all keys, with the usual modulations, thus:—



We will give some examples.

87. The simple Octave—

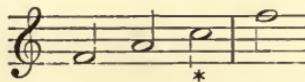


This is most useful, introducing as it does a sudden change from a low to a high register. As soon as the slightest inclination to force the upper note is heard, stop and try that alone, and insist upon a soft full tone; when this is secured, try again, but do not let a single unsatisfactory note pass without correction.

88. The simple Arpeggio—

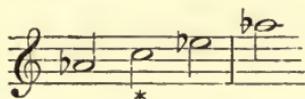


This is an advance upon the octave. Here there is more opportunity for forcing up the lower register, which must be most carefully prevented. Insist upon a closed note for the upper C, soft and full. As we take the figure up the chromatic scale, the same sound will appear as its third note—



Try this C separately, securing again the same full tone. Then the highest note will require attention; it must be taken with the head voice and wide open. Secure the proper opening by directing two fingers to be inserted between the teeth and insist

on a soft tone. When we get a little higher, the C will occur as the second note of the phrase—



Take this separately in the same manner as before. All this requires great care and patience at first, but in actual practice it is astonishing how soon the true tone will be acquired, if it is distinctly understood that the teacher will be satisfied with nothing less; and it is soon sufficient, when a passage is unsatisfactory, merely to touch the pianoforte and ask for it again. After a time the arpeggio may be extended, thus—

Thus 

and 

ultimately 

THE SCALE.

eg. In rising by conjunct degrees the danger of forcing the registers upwards is so great that it is best to confine the practice at first to the downward scale. Here is a good form—



In this there is plenty of time to secure a full tone for the highest note, soft and round, vibrating against the roof of the mouth; this can be taken right down to the bottom of the scale, only changing to the chest register for the last note. Taking the same figure higher up, the plan will be different. Here it is on F—

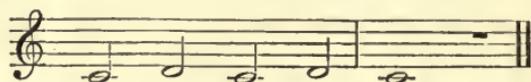


Listen always for the middle C, and never rest until you are satisfied with it.

90. Now may follow the ascending scale—



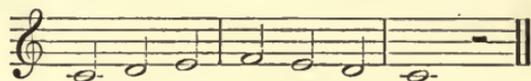
but before trying it in its complete form, it is well to take it in fragments—*e.g.*, two notes—



Three notes:

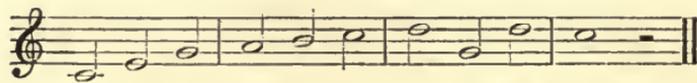
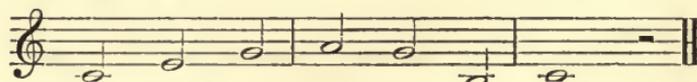


Four notes:



and so on; always one more till the eight are reached.

91. As advance is gradually made, the choirmaster can invent new figures for himself, derived from the three types already given. Here are a few—



92. It will be noticed that we have not included either chromatic scales or minor keys; if desired, the choirmaster can add them himself. Such figures can be multiplied *ad infinitum*, according to the ingenuity of the choirmaster.

93. To start a new figure, play it over on the pianoforte, once if simple, several times if complicated; it will soon be caught up if it be an interesting musical phrase.

94. We have written all the examples in C; these will, of course, be transposed into every key, ascending by steps of semitones, as already indicated.

95. Though we have given a considerable variety, we recommend, for early practice, only the simplest figures; the actual form of the figure is of little consequence, it is the *tone* that is important. This must be constantly in the mind of the choirmaster. Let him have his own ideal of tone, and be satisfied with nothing until he realises it. Let him, whenever opportunity occurs, go and hear the best choirs, and aim at making his own as much like them as possible. Remember that harsh, forced tone is never necessary, it is always the result of a wrong method. Every boy *can* be made, to produce his voice properly, though it is a task of much greater difficulty in some cases than in others; but we venture to believe that in no cases, except those of natural deformity, is it an impossibility.

96. In practising vocal exercises, always insist on *soft* singing—the softer the better—the loud tone will come soon enough when required; it is only by practising softly that a full even tone can be gained.

97. After some progress has been made with the foregoing exercises, we must turn back to our table of vowels, and take the seven long ones in the order given, viz.:

OO. O. OR. AH. ER. A. E.

Let these now be sung in succession upon the lower parts of the voice, again placing that invaluable little article, the cork, between the teeth. It will be seen that in practising OO, AH, we have already passed through the positions for O and OR; these, therefore, will give little trouble.

98. O needs the most care; it should be well opened and rounded. It is often pronounced with the mouth almost closed, reducing it to a shabby sort of ER, and depriving it of its fine, bold character. Insist then always upon a "Round O."

99. Passing to the other side, we have some new sounds. ER will give little trouble; it very much resembles AH, the difference being that for it the tongue is slightly raised. See that it is pronounced with a broad, full sound.

100. A is the most difficult vowel to give a satisfactory sound to; it is often made so thin as to be hardly distinguishable from E. Correct this by making it lean in the direction of ER—that is to say, let the tongue lie as low as possible without actually departing from the vowel.

101. E will sometimes give trouble; to form it, the tongue is raised high against the roof of the mouth, thus blocking the way of the tone. Let the sound ring well in the front of the mouth, and if any difficulty is experienced, direct the tip of the tongue to be curled over in a downward direction, touching the gums below the front teeth; this will allow room for the resonance to take place.

102. When good vowel-tone has been formed, we must turn to the consonants. These, though they interfere as we have seen with the vowel quality, are yet of the utmost importance, if singing is to answer its true purpose, to convey thought. We must then consider how to get the maximum of clearness and distinctness with the least possible disturbance to the resonance cavities. Remember two things: (1) Untrained singers, when pronouncing a consonant, will invariably allow the teeth to close. (2) This is in no case necessary; but, on the other hand, the consonant will be much clearer if the teeth are still kept apart. Further, if the teeth are allowed to close, they will either remain so and spoil the vowel that follows, or, being again opened, the two actions will involve a considerable waste of energy.

103. It is useless to tell a class of singers to keep the teeth apart while sounding a consonant, the force of habit will be so strong as to utterly prevent them doing so. However, we can remedy this in a moment. Take up the cork again and place it in position; then go through the series of vowels; but this time with the consonant placed before each, the desired effect will be obtained at once without the slightest trouble. At first the corks will be pinched so hard as to be, perhaps, bitten in two. The learners must be warned against this. Let them aim at keeping a perfect cork, if possible, without a dent. When this has been achieved, the improvement in the tone will be astonishing.

104. Take first the simpler consonants, as P, T, K, making the artificial words Poo, Po, Por, &c.; then add a consonant after the vowel—*e.g.*, Poot, Pot, Port, &c.; then when skill has been acquired, double and triple combinations can be gone through—*e.g.*, Kloot, Klot, Klort, &c. These exercises should be practised only on the lower and easier parts of the voice, where the vowel quality can be well produced without difficulty. They should not be continued for long together with beginners, as they are somewhat tiring.

105. And now, having studied vocal tone, vowel quality, and consonant utterance, we are prepared for the interpretation of music combined with words.

PART III.

THE RENDERING OF CHURCH MUSIC.

I.

HYMNS.

106. The choral parts of the Service may be divided into four groups:—

- (1) Metrical Hymns.
- (2) The Responses, &c.
- (3) The Psalms.
- (4) Services and Anthems, including Oratorios, &c.

We will consider these in order:—

First, the Hymn. The poor Hymn! What shameful treatment it sometimes receives! It is pushed aside as if it were a thing of no consequence; it is scrambled through, dragged or hurried, as the case may be; often sung quite inaccurately, seldom really well. This does not apply only to weak choirs, but to many that in other respects are good. We have heard a choir that boasts of its reputation, and considers itself second to none, simply murder a hymn; rush through it, regardless of time, tone, phrasing, and all that goes to make musical expression. We would urge a strong plea in favour of more care being bestowed upon this really important item of a musical service. If we consider the object of music in worship, its importance is manifest. Music is an aid to devotion and a means of edification. Now, only a certain number of the mass of worshippers can follow the intricacies of an elaborate anthem; not all the expressions in the Psalms are clearly understood; but the meaning of the simple hymn is plain to all. The words are usually without obscurity, the form of the tune can be grasped without any musical education. If then this simple, homely material is used with all the advantages of musical expression, its power and usefulness are boundless; it appeals to all, its message is never lost.

107. Amongst the points that are often overlooked in singing hymns are the following:—

- (1) Accent and emphasis.
- (2) Breath-taking and phrasing.
- (3) Accuracy of time.
- (4) (a) Endings with vowels.
(b) Endings with consonants.

108. Accent is the regular alternation of strong and weak beats, which takes place in every bar. Though every musician understands this matter theoretically, in actual teaching too often it receives insufficient attention. The best way to secure its correctness is to teach boys to

BEAT TIME

and insist upon them always doing so when practising measured music. When the habit has been acquired, all that is necessary is to point out that the first beat in the bar, which is always the down beat, bears the strong accent; if this is mastered the other beats may be left to take care of themselves.

109. The accent of the words should correspond with that of the music. It generally does. When, however, the two differ, a compromise must be effected; the musical accent must be reduced to a minimum, so as to clash as little as possible with that of the words. Many instances will occur to the reader—we give a very familiar one:—

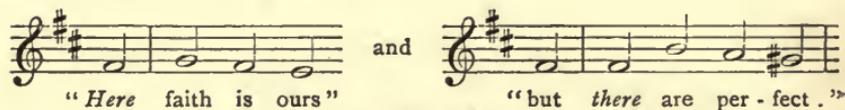


110. Emphasis is a special and irregular accent. It occurs both in music and words. In the former certain notes will stand out more prominently than others on account of their position, and should be dwelt on for a somewhat longer time than actually written, *e.g.*—



the note marked * should be sung slightly longer than written, besides bearing a strong accent. This is a matter that requires great taste and judgment. As a general rule in singing, when a phrase ascends and descends again the highest note must be slightly prolonged, the time thus lost being deducted from the following note.

111. Verbal emphasis is a simpler matter. It is constantly necessary to bring out the sense of the words (which, remember, is the object of singing). Notwithstanding, it is even more frequently overlooked than accent; certain words will require dwelling upon more than others, or else, in some cases, the sense will be entirely lost, *e.g.*—



112. The words in singing should be rendered just as in speaking, as regards emphasis; important words should be

shown to be so by an extra amount of tone, unimportant ones should be taken simply with the natural accent. Emphasis should not supersede accent—it should assist and amplify it.

113. Many hymns end with a refrain or "Chorus," *e.g.*—
"Let us with a gladsome mind."
"Hark! hark, my soul."
"O Paradise!"
"All glory, laud and honour."
And all Litanies.

114. Others commence with a motto or "text," as—
"Thine for ever."
"Peace, perfect peace."
"Holy, Holy, Holy."

115. Some have both these characteristics, as—
"Just as I am."
"Nearer, my God, to Thee."

116. In every case these points of structure should be noticed by the choirmaster, and the phrases taken in a special marked manner.

117. (2) Breath-taking and phrasing. We mention these separately as they are not quite identical, all breath-taking involves phrasing, but not all phrasing necessitates breath-taking. The rule for the first is negative:—

- (a) Never take breath when so doing destroys the sense of the words.

for the second positive—

- (b) Always make a break (*i.e.*, end a phrase) when so doing will bring out the meaning of the words.

118. This is an extremely important matter in hymns, as often in no two successive verses are the words written to suit the same plan of phrasing, and in such cases we must each time adapt the music afresh to the words.

119. Only passages of a certain length can be sung in one breath; beyond a certain point it becomes a physical necessity to renew the breath; we must then choose the place most suitable in regard to the words—*not* always at the end of a line, this will sometimes quite spoil the sense. Indeed, a case occurs to us in which it would be best not to make any break at the end of the verse—in Hymn 17 (A. and M.) the verse ends thus, with only a comma—



"A - bid - ing in the breast,"

If we go straight on to the next—



"Save that Thy will be done,"

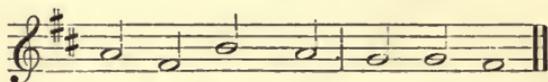
without any break, the improvement in the effect will be marked. But such refinement as this is only possible with a very highly trained choir. Under ordinary circumstances it is advisable to make a pause at the conclusion of every stanza.

120. Here is a case where the taking of breath should be delayed beyond the end of a line—



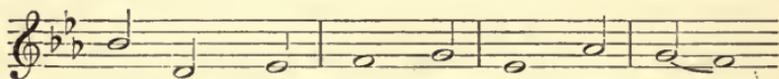
“ O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till . . * The night is gone.”

If a breath is made at * the sense is lost ; breath should be taken after “ fen ” and “ torrent,” and also, if required, after “ night.” Here is a case where, though a fresh supply of breath is not required, a break should be made in order to make the sense clear—

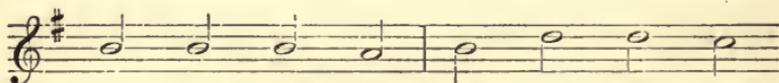


“ Light of lights * when falls the even.”

and such sentences as these—



“ The length * breadth * depth and height * to prove.”



“ Find - ing * fol - lowing * keep - ing * strug - gling.*”

Here each word introduces a fresh thought. When a break is made at * the meaning is brought home.

121. Though more breath is not *required* in these cases, to insure the break it is useful to tell beginners to take it, so that there may be no misunderstanding. When good habits begin to be formed, it is sufficient to explain that there must be a momentary cessation of sound at such phrases.

122. No singing can be called satisfactory without correct phrasing. Let it therefore be regarded as a matter of the first importance.

123. If any doubt arises as to where the phrase should be marked, read over the words, simply thinking of the meaning, regardless of the music ; in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the required phrasing will be obvious.

124. In teaching boys, let them understand that you rely upon their intelligence ; that as they would not *talk* nonsense, so they should not *sing* it. Drive home the rule that : “ Breath should be taken *according to the sense.*” When it is incorrectly taken, repeat the passage and ask why it is wrong. Let the answer come : “ Because it makes nonsense ! ” Ask where the best

place would be (for a *sensible* person). Then notice how intelligent boys sometimes can be.

125. Accuracy of time. Let us before all things be accurate. Think of musical time as representing truth; of mistakes, in this respect, as falsehood. Measured music should be sung rhythmically, though this must not be taken to imply that the time should always rival the accuracy of a mechanical organ.

126. A certain liberty is sometimes necessary, but this should never go so far as to obscure the rhythm. When the boundary is overstepped, and, for instance, a bar of quadruple time is made to sound like triple, an egregious error has been committed. Who has not heard such performances as this—

perpetrated, not always by ignorant people, but even by those who ought to know better? It seems as if only in churches, alas! can such enormities be heard! The very same people would probably never dream of playing a piece of instrumental music in such a manner, or of so treating any vocal music except the long suffering hymn! We earnestly plead then, before all things, for *accuracy*. If the ear is disgusted and offended by such mistakes as we have quoted, nothing else can make amends.

127. The instances of incorrect time hitherto given have occurred in the middle of phrases. There are less obvious cases which will require separate attention; and these are the—

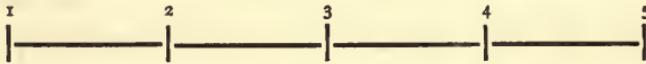
Endings—or final notes.

Before insisting upon their correct rendering, we must first decide *what that is*, and we may here give another rule:

“For every final note count one more beat than is written.” When the last word terminates with a vowel, this extra beat must be the point where *silence* commences, *not before*. When the word terminates with a consonant, that consonant must be sounded on the extra beat.

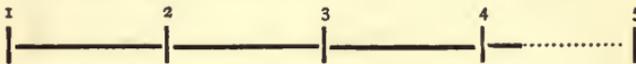
128. It is important in training a choir to be quite clear as to what is here expected in order that absolute unanimity may

prevail. The above rule, if invariably followed, will secure this unanimity. Let us consider that, supposing a horizontal line represents continuous musical sound and this be intersected by vertical lines representing a division into beats, each beat will continue in force until another takes its place, thus :—

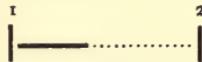


Here we have written down five beats, the last being the point where silence commences ; but the horizontal line being taken to represent the vocal tone, the sound will be only that of four beats, ceasing at the *end* of the fourth beat—that is, the commencement of the fifth.

129. It is sometimes supposed that it is sufficient to *arrive* at the last beat indicated by the written note, without extending the sound as far as the next beat, thus :—



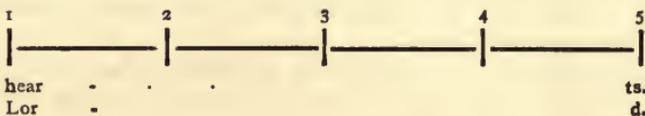
That this is incorrect will be seen if we suppose the note, instead of being of four beats, to be reduced to one ; here, if the same plan be adopted, we shall get quite a short note, not at all like what is expected—



and the inaccuracy will be apparent. If, further, we suppose the time to be very slow indeed, we shall then have a long pause of silence instead of sound, which could not be tolerated for a moment. But for however many beats the note may be supposed to be prolonged, the principle remains the same. If, then, we have proved our case for one beat, the same will apply for any number.

130. In the case of a consonant ending, the matter is not quite so apparent, though it is of still greater consequence. The importance of a choir clearly and sharply sounding the final consonants will be readily admitted. With what fatal errors do we meet when this is neglected—we may hear “Lor” for “Lord,” “she” for “sheep,” “throw” for “throne,” and a hundred other absurdities. Yet if all the voices are not exactly together the remedy will be almost worse than the evil ; we shall hear a shower of “ss” and “ts,” resembling the explosion of crackers or the scaring of cats.

131. As a cure for these evils we then recommend that the consonant should be sounded *on* the beat following the last written, thus :—



If it is not so arranged we wander in a fog. Where else shall it come? No two persons will agree as to the answer and the result will be dire confusion. If it is objected that this plan will result in prolonging the note unduly, the reply will be that the consonant, being presumably sounded instantaneously, may be regarded as a negligible quantity; further, that the consonant is *not a musical sound*, only a noise of a definite character; and that the written notes, being admittedly to indicate the music, do not of necessity include the consonant.

Now if this rule be accepted and acted upon, we are in a strong position as regards aiming at accuracy. The time beating, already established, will furnish an infallible guide to the exact length of a note, and then, except from carelessness or want of practice, no mistake can arise.

132. Hymn tunes may be divided into three classes:—*

(1) The ancient Choral—

Instances—

“The old Hundredth.”

“O Sacred Head.”

(2) The modern variety of the same form, of a lighter character, well adapted for congregational singing—

Instances—

“How sweet the Name.”

“O Love Divine.”

(3) The modern developed tune, partaking more of the character of the part-song; not so well adapted for congregational singing, but often most effective when well sung by a choir—

Instances—

“O Paradise!”

“Lead, kindly Light.”

“Days and moments.”

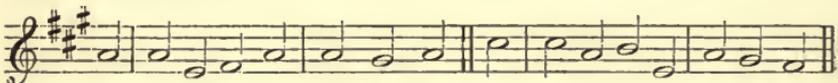
133. There is no better training for boys' voices than the practising of hymns. The tune taken alone serves as a vocal exercise, and when the words are added, all the principles of musical expression can be illustrated on a small and simple scale; this simplicity allowing the learner to give attention to the minutest details, which might be overlooked in a more complicated work. Remember that only by taking pains over small and apparently unimportant matters have all great works been accomplished. “Despise not the day of small things.” Practise every hymn diligently and carefully, let not a single point escape notice. Aim at the highest possible standard, and only there rest content.

* The writer has not included Plain Song tunes, which require special treatment.

134. Always regard then—

- (1) The production of vowel tone.
- (2) Distinctness of consonants.
- (3) Accent and emphasis.
- (4) Breath-taking and phrasing.
- (5) Accuracy of time.
- (6) Endings, (a) with vowels; (b) with consonants.

135. To illustrate what we have been saying, let us take a well-known hymn—



O Love Divine, how sweet thou art! When shall I find my willing heart



All ta-ken up by Thee? I thirst, I faint I die to prove



The greatness of re - deeming love, The love of Christ to me.

136. First use the tune as a vocal study on AH, modifying the vowel tone as we ascend the scale; the C sharp in the second line should be well rounded, with soft full tone; the E of the fifth line opened wider and taken with the head voice, without any effort, modifying the AH in the direction of OR; then add the words. We commence with an exclamation: "O Love Divine! How sweet thou art!" The first part must be emphatic, calling attention to the wonder and greatness of the subject. See that the O is a real O, round and bold. The second part limits the thought—"How sweet," this is what arrests the attention; if the singer is thinking of the sense, he will instinctively dwell slightly here, as if unwilling to leave the words.

"When shall I find my willing heart all taken up by Thee?"

Point out that this is a question. What are the leading words? "When" and "all." Neither of these occurs on an accent, but the position of their notes in the scale will make the words prominent. They should be slightly dwelt upon, but not so far as to disturb the rhythm. The vowels in "when" and "shall" are both troublesome on the C sharp; try the note to "OO," and having secured a full round tone, direct that these other vowels shall match it in quality.

"I thirst, I faint, I die."

Three thoughts—point this out. Each one more emphatic than the one before—"thirst," "faint," "die"; let them be phrased and emphasised accordingly.

“To prove the greatness of redeeming love.”

Here is the “greatness” again. Let this word take the emphasis and receive special attention. Neither of the vowels contained in it is easy on the notes given; try them separately if the tone is not good, and do not go farther until it satisfies you. Insist upon the rule that—

The top note must be the best.

If boys always bear this in mind, and once acquire the habit of producing the extreme notes well, the choirmaster will have little else to trouble him as regards production.

“The love of Christ to me.”

Here the thought is again limited; the “sweetness” is returned to, and not so much emphasis is required. It will be noticed how admirably the tune suits the words, rising when the emotion increases and falling when it becomes quieter. Observe the *ending*, secure a good tone for the E, and hold it three beats, stopping it on the fourth.

137. We have here given a specimen of a lesson. All the points touched upon should be in the mind of the choirmaster; it would not, however, be advisable to notice them all at once with beginners, this would only give rise to confusion. Draw attention to one thing at a time, and when this is plainly understood, add another. “Line upon line—here a little and there a little.” How this shall be done must of course be left to the judgment of the individual choirmaster. All we would say is, never let a defect *finally* pass if it can be remedied.

2.

THE RESPONSES.

138. Under this heading we must include all the parts of the Service that are recited on one note. “The Confession,” “Lord’s Prayer,” “Apostles’ Creed,” and the “Amens.” We will consider them in order.

THE GENERAL CONFSSION.

139. Faults to look out for here are—(a) sinking in pitch, (b) false accents.

140. The Confession is sometimes taken on a low note, sometimes on a middle note. Opinions differ as to which is the more desirable; probably the balance is in favour of the former. As, however, a middle note is better for boys’ voices, we will suppose that we are using one.

141. Sinking in pitch, as a habitual fault, is never necessary. Sometimes, through adverse circumstances, the best choirs will be guilty of it; but it is almost always caused by a wrong

production, the forcing of a lower register upwards, which results in a harsh, vulgar tone, and makes the sustaining of pitch a most difficult matter. The difficulty, as a rule, is not that a note is *too high*, as we shall hear some complain, but that the part of the voice used is *too low*.

142. To secure the right register with boys try the "OO, AH" (§ 78) exercise on the reciting note very softly; the right tone is then sure to appear. Proceed then to practise the words. Directly the tone becomes thin and forced, revert to "OO, AH," and continue this until the tone used in reciting matches that of the exercise.

143. If a middle note is used, we recommend one well up in the scale. A in preference to G. It is easier for boys to produce good tone in the manner indicated on the former than on the latter, and is better practice for the voices.

144. Under our second heading comes a common and gross error. Untrained singers will often insist upon throwing an accent on the first and last syllables of a sentence, whether they naturally bear one or not. We hear such renderings as these—"Álmighty, réstore, áccording, Fathér, sinnérs, penitént." The choirmaster, when this occurs, should repeat the word as maltreated, and remark that no such word occurs in the English language; the singers are therefore talking nonsense. This will probably soon put matters right.

145. In the Confession it is also necessary to carefully insist upon the accurate and distinct enunciation of every vowel and consonant. Do not let a boy say, "Strayed'm Thy ways," "offend'd," "things 'ch we ought 'ooa done." It is hardly necessary to remark that all aspirates must be rigidly demanded.

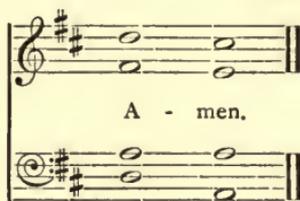
146. The Confession must be taken at a moderate pace. Not so slow as to sound tedious; not so fast as to lose distinctness and sound irreverent. In practising it is well to take it slowly at first, and afterwards to increase the pace as much as is desired.

147. Let the Confession invariably be taken softly. There is only one place in the Prayer Book where any direction as to musical expression occurs, and that is here. We are directed to say the Confession with "an humble voice"—this is usually understood to mean a soft subdued tone: and so let it be observed.

148. All the above remarks apply equally to the "Lord's Prayer" and "Creed," except that these are almost invariably taken on a middle note and in a rather louder tone of voice.

149. There is one further matter worth notice. When the Priest recites with the people, there is often doubt as to how the commencement shall be made. Very frequently the Priest alone takes the opening words, the people joining in with what follows. This is sometimes objected to on the ground that in such a case the people are excluded from their rightful part, and with some show of reason too. There is really no principle involved at all, it is merely a matter of convenience.

quite short and ragged. A good plan is to regard each note as bearing two beats, the last syllable will then count three, thus—



1. 2. 3. 4. | 5.

The manner in which a simple Amen is sung is the test of a good choir. The tone should be round and full; all voices should commence exactly together and end in the same manner. Before every Amen a deep breath should be inhaled, and this done while the last words of the preceding prayer are being read, so that there may be no intervening pause. It is necessary for the choir to be always on the alert and prepared to commence exactly at the right moment.

3.

THE PSALMS.

156. A whole treatise might be written on the rendering of the Psalms alone. In them is opportunity for the display of all the finest qualities of a first-rate choir, and in them difficulties to tax to the uttermost the skill of the most accomplished.

157. A great deal of discussion is heard nowadays as to what system of pointing shall be adopted and what kind of chants used. We hear fiery arguments, and see pitched battles raging around these questions; but there is very little attention given as to how this pointing and these chants are to be rendered. We speak of course generally. There are notable exceptions, where admirable chanting is heard; but, as a rule, the standard of chanting is extremely low.

158. Taking for granted that we have selected our Psalter and chosen our Chants, the following points in chanting occur as demanding attention:—

- (1) The Recitation.
- (2) The Accent Mark.
- (3) Middle words.
- (4) Endings.

159. The Recitation.—This should be taken at exactly the same pace as the inflexion that follows, neither quicker nor slower. At the end of any given sentence, the final syllables must be regarded as being inflected—primarily, for the sake of variety; secondarily, to intensify the emotion; but the *pace* with which the words are taken should not vary from beginning to

end. If it does, the inference is that the words so prolonged are of more importance than the others; whereas often the words occurring in the middle of a long sentence are the chief ones.

160. Equal attention should be given to all words, whether they are sung on one note or another. To insure this, it is important to point out that in the course of a long sentence many accents will occur and certain emphatic syllables. In rhymed verse the accents occur regularly; in the poetry of the Psalms, irregularly. Hence the difficulty.

161. This brings in our second division:

The Accent Mark.—Nothing has given rise to more misunderstanding and error in chanting than this. So much so, that some authorities have advocated its being abolished altogether. We do not think this would be desirable, and will endeavour to show why.

162. It is important to make clear (*a*) what the accent does not mean, and (*b*) what it does mean. It does not always mean that the syllable over which it is placed is the strongest in the recitation; frequently this is far from the case. Neither does it mean that this syllable must of necessity be held longer than others. But it does mean this: That the syllable over which it is placed is the last before the bar that will bear *any stress at all*. If this is clearly understood, its usefulness will be apparent.

163. Here is an instance—

“Wherewithal shall a yóung man | cleanse his | way.”

“Young” should be slightly accented, but it must not be so strong as “wherewithal,” nor as “cleanse,” which follows; neither must it be held longer than “man,” but for an exactly equal time.

“Even by ruling himself | after | Thy | law.”

Here “self” will bear a slight accent, but should not be as strong as “ruling,” nor as “law,” which follows. Again—

“With my whole héart | have I | sought Thee :”

“Heart” bears an accent, but the principal word is “whole,” which should be still stronger; and later, “sought” bears a stress. If “heart” is rendered more strongly than the other syllables, the meaning of the thought is entirely changed. The point is not that the “heart” as distinguished from any other member does the action. What the Psalmist dwells upon is the “seeking,” and that thoroughly (“*whole heart*”).

164. What we require, then, may be thus briefly put: We want *more accents, not less*. By all means retain the present marks for their proper use, to guide the singer at the point where the inflection takes place; but let us also add the other necessary accents and emphasis which the sense of the words require.

165. The “accent” then, indicating the last strong syllable before the bar, should be taken as representing the first semi-breve before the chant. When it is followed by one or more weak

syllables, this semibreve should be divided according to the sense of the words. For rules for such division, the reader is referred to Sir John Stainer's admirable Introduction to the "Cathedral Psalter."

166. Middle Words—that is, words occurring on notes intermediate between the reciting note and close or half-close. These need special attention. When in any bar are set two corresponding syllables to the two notes of the chant, there is little difficulty, though it is important to notice that the first of the two must always bear an accent, though sometimes only a weak one, *e.g.*—

"With my whole héart | have I | ^{*}sought Thee."

Here, "have" should be light and the emphasis given to "sought." When to one note of the music, either the up or down beat, are set two syllables, the matter requires more attention. A badly trained choir will invariably clip the first of these syllables short and prolong the second. This is just the opposite to what should be done. Insist that *where two syllables take the place of one, the first should always be longer and stronger than the second.*

167. This applies to a sub-division both of the down beat and the up beat. Instances—

"O come let us sing | unto the | ^{*}Lord."

Here "un" should be distinctly longer than "to," and "the" which takes the second beat, being an unimportant syllable, may be somewhat lessened, so that the three syllables together will be rendered almost like a triplet. Of course we should not actually so describe it, but, if done properly, the effect will be nearly so.

168. A familiar instance of two syllables on the up beat is—

"Glory be to the Father | and ^{*}to the | Son."

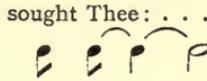
This is more difficult to get rendered correctly; but the teacher should insist on the distinctness of both syllables, and that the first should be slightly longer than the second.

169. When three syllables occur to one note, the same principle applies. Here the lengthening of the musical note must be apparent—*e.g.*, trisyllables such as "vanity," "multitude," "verily" are set in this way and should be "spread out;" taken as an even triplet, with the stress on the first syllable.

170. All this applies to endings; but when two syllables are here set to the last note, they divide the time of a semibreve; not, as in other cases, that of a minim; so that, according to our rule, the semibreve will become two minims, with the accent, as before, invariably on the first syllable, *e.g.*—

"With my whole héart | have I | ^{*}sought Thee."

Here obviously the first takes the accent and slightly more than half the semibreve; yet one frequently hears such a rendering as:



the absurdity of which is apparent when written down.

171. Three syllables should as a rule be rendered as a triplet, four syllables as a quadruplet, on the same plan.

172. This question of endings in chanting is one of the most important to observe, and one with respect to which lack of intelligence is most frequently displayed.

173. To sum up, we will take some complete sentences, and apply to them what has been said. The sentences will be written out in full, just as they should be sung.

- ~ Represents a light syllable.
 = " an accent.
 = " an emphasis.

(a) O come, let us sing un - to the Lord :

The musical notation for (a) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: O (light), come (light), let (light), us (light), sing (light), un - (light), to (light), the (light), Lord (accent). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'un - to' and a quarter note for 'the'. The final note 'Lord' is a half note with an accent.

(b) let us heart-i-ly re-joice in the strength of our sal - va - tion.

The musical notation for (b) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: let (light), us (light), heart-i-ly (light), re-joice (light), in (light), the (light), strength (light), of (light), our (light), sal - (light), va - (light), tion (light). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'sal - va - tion'.

(c) Let us come be-fore His pre-sence with thanks - giv - ing :

The musical notation for (c) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: Let (light), us (light), come (light), be-fore (light), His (light), pre-sence (light), with (light), thanks - (light), giv - (light), ing (light). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'pre-sence' and a quarter note for 'ing'. There is a triplet of eighth notes for 'thanks - giv - ing'.

(d) and shew our-selves glad in Him with Psalms.

The musical notation for (d) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: and (light), shew (light), our-selves (light), glad (light), in (light), Him (light), with (light), Psalms (light). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'Psalms'.

(e) For Hé is the Lord our God :

The musical notation for (e) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: For (light), Hé (light), is (light), the (light), Lord (light), our (light), God (light). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'Hé' and a quarter note for 'God'. There is a triplet of eighth notes for 'Hé is the'.

(f) and we are the peo-ple of His pas-ture, and the sheep of His hand..

The musical notation for (f) shows a single melodic line in G major. The notes are: and (light), we (light), are (light), the (light), peo-ple (light), of (light), His (light), pas-ture (light), and (light), the (light), sheep (light), of (light), His (light), hand.. (light). The notes are mostly quarter notes, with a half note for 'pas-ture' and a quarter note for 'hand..'. There is a triplet of eighth notes for 'peo-ple of His'.

(g) In His hand are all the cór - ners of the éarth

Musical notation for (g) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

(h) and the stréngth of the hills is His al - so.

Musical notation for (h) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked above the third measure. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

(j) Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther, and to the Son

Musical notation for (j) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked above the third measure. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

(k) and to the Ho - ly Ghost:

Musical notation for (k) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

(l) As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev - er shall be:

Musical notation for (l) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked above the third measure. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

(m) world without end. . . A - men.

Musical notation for (m) in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. There are bar lines under the first, third, fifth, and seventh measures.

174. The length of time occupied in singing any sentence should depend upon the number of words it contains. All syllables before the accent should be reckoned up mentally into so many bars, and these bars taken at exactly the same pace as the inflected portion of the chant. This is nothing new. In the old days of Gregorian chant a separate note was invariably set to every syllable of a sentence, thus clearly showing the relative pace of the whole. This plan was dropped with the gradual introduction of the modern Anglican chant, in consequence of the complications that would have arisen from the necessity of indicating a separate note for every part of the harmony. But the Anglican chant is the legitimate descendant of the Gregorian tone, and the proper method of chanting is precisely the same in both.

175. A great deal of unnecessary pains have been taken to show an imaginary difference between the two, sometimes to the disparagement of the latter. One writer argues that in the Anglican chant a stress should fall on the last note; another, that

this should occur in the penultimate bar. Both are right, and both are wrong. The stress and accent should follow the sense of the words ; if the last syllable of the sentence be an emphatic one, it should be so rendered ; and, if not, it should be sung lightly. Everywhere intelligence and common sense should be the guide ; as regards accent and emphasis, the words must lead, the music following. Whenever this is not so, the rendering is incorrect.

176. To teach a choir, it is not necessary that the whole sentence should be written out with musical notes, as in the examples. These have been given merely as a guide to the teacher. Supposing this plan were adopted, it might help in cases of dulness or insufficient practice ; but it is far better to rely upon the mental power of the singers themselves, and when, through this, a really good interpretation has been attained, the necessity of constantly considering the meaning of the words will throw life and reality into the singing, otherwise unattainable.

177. In practising the Psalms, the process in the mind of the trainer should be as follows :—

- (1) Good tone production.
- (2) Evenness of pace throughout a sentence.
- (3) The addition of emphasis when required.
- (4) The subtraction of accents when not required.
- (5) Graduation of tone, soft and loud ; which is, however, a matter of little importance compared with the foregoing vital points.

178. To one not accustomed to teaching in such a way, this method will possibly sound complicated and difficult ; but when put into actual practice the difficulties are much less than might be supposed. In most sentences of the Psalms, when it is made clear that the meaning and natural accent of the words are the one thing to be considered, a moment's thought will show what the correct rendering will be ; in the rare cases when any doubt can arise the choirmaster will have to decide, and himself first sing the phrase in question in the manner he feels best, the choir repeating it after him.

179. Let the teacher himself feel, and then endeavour to impress upon his pupils the beauty and dignity of the Psalms, and how great a privilege it is to have the opportunity of interpreting such glorious poetry. How every word should be treated with reverence and awe ; how every sentence contains some golden thought, which we should be wiser and better for making our own. If teacher and learner alike regard the Psalms in this way, no trouble will seem too great to give them a true rendering. The labour thus spent will be a joy, and its fruits a great reward.*

* The foregoing remarks upon chanting apply equally to the Confession in the Communion Service, as set in Stainer's "Marbeck," which is really a kind of irregular chant.

180. In respect to antiphonal singing, we strongly recommend the use of the half-verse arrangement. There is every argument in its favour. As a rule, it assists immensely in bringing out the structure of the poetry, and in the great majority of Psalms it is obviously intended to be employed. It also makes good chanting much easier to attain, as with it in use each side has always just as much to sing as can conveniently be taken in one breath. Then follows a pause for replenishing, and so a brightness and vigour can be insured, which, with a whole long verse to sing in one breath, is hardly possible.

181. Whatever plan be adopted, enforce this rule—let any one side take a full breath *while the other side are singing their last bar*; not wait until they have finished. If this rule be carefully followed, no unpleasant break need ever occur.

182. As regards the structure of the Psalms, and the way in which chants should be set to them in accordance with the structure of the poetry and the spirit of the words, there is no better guide than Westcott's "Paragraph Psalter."

4.

ANTHEMS AND SERVICES.

183. All that we have said under the heading of Hymns applies to the practice of these, and if the Hymn has been thoroughly studied, the Anthem ought to give little trouble.

184. Two new points may be noticed—

- (a) The "leads" in contrapuntal music.
- (b) Pauses.

185. In all chorus singing, a good start and a good finish are half the battle. Take the greatest care that when any part enters alone, its first note shall be firm and decided, without the slightest hesitation. Insist that *every* singer of a part shall sing his first note at the proper time. When the note is a difficult one to take, you may help the singers in two ways: either point out some other part that has the same note in a different octave which may be listened for, or else stop and let the singers sing their own first note clearly and decidedly, and, when they have well heard and felt its pitch, go back a bar or more, pointing out how many beats there will be before the lead. Then, if the fact that the singers have heard their note with their own voices will instinctively guide them in returning to it, the difficulty is reduced to a matter of time only, which, if the beating is being rigidly enforced, will be soon overcome.

186. Pauses.—It is to be hoped that the day is approaching when all indefinite pauses in vocal music will be abolished,

and the exact length that the composer requires for any given note clearly indicated. When a conductor beats time the difficulty is not so much felt, though even then it would be much better to know exactly what is expected than to be left to the taste and caprice of each individual conductor. But when no conductor is present, there ensues a state of "confusion worse confounded." No one knows exactly how long the pause note is to be held and therefore no one is to blame; and the pause coming as it does so often as the final note of a piece, just when we want complete unanimity and decision we get the very opposite.

187. The only remedy, since composers continue to write indefinitely in this respect, is for the choirmaster to go over the music carefully, and, having decided for how many beats any particular pause-note should, in his opinion, be held, to have that number clearly marked in each copy, and see that it is observed.

5.

READING AT SIGHT AND LEARNING NEW MUSIC.

188. Sight reading is the power of mentally picturing the musical sounds represented by written notes, and of promptly reproducing these sounds. It is only acquired by practice, constant repetition, and unwearied attention to small details.

189. In teaching boys to read at sight, the main points to consider are—

- (1) Pitch.
- (2) Duration.

190. Under the first heading, it is necessary for the sake of clearness to teach the names of the lines and spaces and the names of the various intervals; though the mere name of a thing is only a small matter: it is its meaning that is important. It is not necessary to say anything about the theoretical nature of intervals, but only to point out that from any line or space to the next adjacent space or line is called a *second*; from any line to the next line, and from any space to the next space a *third*, &c. Then refer to the vocal exercises, and show that all scales are composed of seconds; that the first two steps of an arpeggio of the common chord are thirds, the final step a fourth; that from the first to the third note of the same is a fifth, from the second to the fourth a sixth. The octave will be constantly recurring.

191. If these figures are by incessant practice imprinted upon the mind, it ought not to be a matter of any difficulty to reproduce them when appearing in other surroundings.

192. There is no need when teaching boys to speak of *minor* and *major*, *perfect* and *imperfect* intervals. When the music is diatonic, it will naturally be sung correctly; when chromatic, the only needful thing is a clear understanding of the accidentals.

The \sharp raises.

The \flat lowers.

The \natural restores.

Refer often to this simple formula, and the boys will take pleasure in applying it to the work they are doing.

193. As to the second head, the names and value of the notes must be learnt; but the one important thing to grasp is that every bar will occupy the same time in singing, whether it contains few or many notes. If, then, the beginning of every bar be made certain through time beating, the difficulties will be much lessened by enabling a general outline of the rhythm to be gained almost at once, into which the details can be filled by degrees.

194. In learning new music it is well to have a definite plan before starting, and the following will be found helpful:—

First, go right through the piece with the help of the pianoforte, and secure a general idea of the time and style of the whole. Secondly, commence again at the beginning, and go on until a difficulty arises; stop here and learn this difficult part, then take a few bars back, and fit in the fragment so learnt with its surroundings. If it should be a florid passage, take it slowly and secure perfect accuracy for every note; if it rises and falls again, take the highest note first, and when the production of that is perfect, add the rest. When the difficulty lies in the intervals, select the worst faults again. The least accurate note should be first aimed at. When that comes with ease, its fellows will soon join it. Lastly, turn to expression; to small details of finish; to gradation of tone; accents; emphasis, and the various other points already noticed in this work.

195. In the beginning, do not worry over small points until a general idea of the whole has been clearly grasped. When first commencing a new piece, it is a great mistake to keep stopping. Such a plan only disheartens a choir and retards progress. Think how a building is erected—

- (1) The foundation is laid.
- (2) The structure is built up.
- (3) The ornaments are added.

On such lines teach new music—

- (1) Consider pace and general outline.
- (2) Accuracy of notes.
- (3) Finish of phrasing and expression.

So will a true, firm, artistic result be gained.

196. No expression is of any avail without accuracy. No accuracy is complete without expression. The two may be taken as representing the masculine and feminine elements in musical performance, neither sufficient without the other. The two combined forming one perfect whole. The union of Strength and Elegance. The union of Truth and Beauty.

6.

CHOIR PRACTICES AS A WHOLE.

197. According to the plan we recommend, there will be three types of practice :—

- (1) For Boys only.
- (2) For Men only.
- (3) Full.

198. The course of study at the first may be as follows. Commence with a series of vocal exercises, as described; then take the Hymns; after they are finished, return to vocal exercises for a few minutes. Then proceed with the Psalms; following with Services, Anthems, and other work; but between each division insert some vocal exercise of short duration. When properly taught, boys can sing for an immense time without fatigue. The length of the practice will depend to a great extent on the time at the disposal of the choirmaster, but from an hour to an hour and a half can be well filled in as a rule. Keep the boys lively, but do not allow chatting or inattention. Ask questions frequently. Let them see that you depend on their intelligence, and that without brains no singing is of any use. Whenever anything goes wrong, ask a boy to explain the error, and only when the answer fails in accuracy correct it yourself. It is remarkable how many boys will be found to possess the sense of absolute pitch. Test this frequently during the singing of vocal exercises. At any particular moment pause and ask what was the last note sung. Very often the answer will be quite correct, and the habit of being thus on the alert to name any sound will be of great importance in acquiring those powers which are the essence of sight reading: *seeing with the ear and hearing with the eye.*

199. For Men only.—Practise all the music just as with the boys. Do not omit small things. Give most attention to the Hymns and Psalms, remembering that no choir able to render these really well is likely to do badly with an Anthem. With a weak choir, try each part separately; with an efficient one this will not always be necessary; but in any case, whenever an

uncertainty occurs, practise each part alone. Sometimes it is a help to add one part after another, thus—

- (1) Bass alone.
- (2) Bass and Tenor.
- (3) Bass, Tenor, and Alto.

At the men's practice, make all the music note-perfect. Questions of expression may be sometimes left for the full practice, but it should not then be needful to learn the notes.

200. Full Practices.—As already stated, these should be regarded as a summing up of the others. It should not be necessary to learn any parts at the full practice; the points to consider should be balance of tone, leads, beginnings, endings, and expression generally. The full practice should be held in Church, with the choir in their places and the choirmaster in the centre of the Chancel, with or without a pianoforte. Voice-training exercises will now be out of place. The choir should wear their cassocks. Nothing in the shape of joking or irreverence should be allowed, as the practice should be regarded as the actual preparation for singing a service.

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