THE EPISTLE

GARDNER

WORSHIP & MUSIC

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SUGGESTIONS FOR CLERGY AND CHOIRMASTERS

BY

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WITH A PREFATORY NOTE

BY

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD

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PREFATORY NOTE

By THE BISHOP OF OXFORD

THE author of this little book describes himself as "one whose somewhat nomad occupation takes him to a great variety of services, both in town and country." Certainly, so far I am like him. But he is a real musician, and I am not. At the same time, music holds so great a place in corporate religion, both as a help and as a hindrance, and the criticisms and suggestions about church music which this book contains so largely commend themselves to my judgment, that I hope I may, without presumption, yield to his request that I would write some words of preface.

Having been a regular church-goer for nearly sixty years, I have seen an extraordinary change come over public worship. The curious thing is that so many of the changes which were profoundly resented as innovations, and even as "popish" innovations, have very rapidly come to assume the position of immemorial traditions, which it requires considerable temerity to question. And yet I cannot doubt that they are very often hindrances and not helps to the spirituality and cordiality of worship. I think,

further, that we mostly feel this. But our organists and choirs have developed habits which have become tyrannous laws. And if there is to be any real reform we must courageously think again about the use of music in public worship from the point of view of the congregation.

I cannot help thinking that this little book ought to be read by clergy, organists, choirmen and women, and by churchmen generally. And I am going to venture to preface it by making a list of a number of points on which I would vote urgency for speedy reforms.

1. The abolition of choral devotions in the vestry.

2. Prompt beginning of the service as soon as the choir and minister have entered the church, both they and the people having already said their preparatory prayers.

3. The use of the natural voice in the preparatory part of the service at Morning and Evening Prayer, i.e. up to the end of the first Lord's Prayer, and in the concluding part of the service—the intercessions: it being clearly understood that wherever the natural voice is used, whether in these portions of the public service or in the pulpit, the Amens should be said and not sung.

4. That where the prayers are sung, the Amens, also sung, should be unaccompanied and unprotracted.

5. That it should be recognised that our Prayer Book gives us the alternative of singing or saying the Psalms. Though the Psalms are doubtless intended to be sung, they require a great deal of pains if the singing is not to obscure their meaning and hinder their apprehension. There are at least a great many country churches where it would be better to say them, still singing the Glorias and the Canticles.

6. That where there are Anthems, it should be considered whether the Anthem consists of a prayer or act of praise, or whether it is a statement such as we naturally listen to sitting when read in the Lessons : and that the congregation should stand or sit accordingly, taking a hint from the clergyman, who at least might have considered the matter beforehand. It is offensive to see a congregation sitting for an act of praise, but there are many Anthems which no more suggest our standing than do the Lessons.

7. That when the Eucharist is sung, still a great part of the service should be said, the part, which may be sung being the Kyrie, the Collects Epistle and Gospel (if that can be properly done), the Creed, the Sursum Corda, etc. (*not* the Comfortable Words), the Benedictus and Agnus Dei (if these are used), the Lord's Prayer and the Gloria in Excelsis.

8. That without undue haste we need to study brevity, and that a severe limit should be set both to the length and number of hymns.

9. That at Evensong the Benediction should end the service absolutely.

10. That in a great many churches the worst place from which to lead the singing is the chancel, and that a crowded chancel does more than anything else to destroy the dignity of the altar.

I hope my temerity will be pardoned in making this list, and if it contains any indiscretion, I hope it will not hinder the circulation of my friend's book, for which I venture to wish all success.

C. OXON.

CUDDESDON, *April* 8, 1918.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC . .

CHAPTER I

WHAT MUSIC CAN DO

" God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear,
The rest may reason and welcome : 'tis we musicians know."
ABT VOGLER.

IT seems strange that Browning should have put these words into the mouth of one who had about him something of the charlatan ; or who, at any rate, was a wandering star in the great musical firmament at the end of the eighteenth century and who left behind him no abiding light for the generations to come. Possibly the poet may have chosen the Abbé Vogler as a prophet of truth, much as he makes " Bishop Blougram " and " Paracelsus " express fine ideas ; or as the Old Testament puts great utterances into the mouth of a Balaam ; in order to show that the deepest kind of insight is often more a matter of what we loosely call " inspiration " from without, than of conscious personal effort.

Anyway, Browning has made his queerly chosen itinerant musician give us a thought for which those who respond to the touch of music may be grateful. Music does, to some of us, in

an extraordinary way bring enlightenment about life. Not for a moment that we in any way claim to be better or wiser than others to whom it makes no such appeal. Still, in moments of intuition, brought about by the influence of this magical art, some of us can dare to say, even in all humility, " 'tis we musicians know."

But, first, a warning is needed. We do well to remember that it is possible to lay claim to this " knowledge," possessed by musicians, in a lower sense than that intended by the poet. To have learned the technical side of his complicated art gives a man a certain advantage over his fellows. To have mastered its elaborate notation, its rules, varieties, traditions, history ; all this puts him to some extent upon a higher ground than that on which ordinary people stand, who have had no such training. And yet, all the time, he really may be further from the inner shrine than some of those whom he is inclined to despise for what he would call their ignorance. I have sometimes felt that, if I wanted to have an appreciative opinion upon a work of musical art written in a fresh and original style, I should obtain a truer judgment from some keen but uneducated music lover than I should from a trained professor of the art. The chances are that the former would have deeper and less biased perceptions than the latter. There is much significance in the stories that Mendelssohn, when he went to hear " Tann-

häuser," had only praise for a bit of contrapuntal imitation that comes in the second Act, and that Sterndale Bennett, after listening to the overture of the same work, said, "Why, this is mere Brummagem Berlioz!" If really distinguished men could show this incapacity to learn from what lay outside the course of their habitual traditions, how much more blinding is often the so-called "knowledge" of quite minor professors of the art of music! And such unjustifiable assumption of superiority, of information and insight that place them on a plane apart from the rest of the world—all this self-esteem often leads to unpleasant consequences. Technical musicians have frequently the reputation of being dogmatic, morbidly sensitive and unwilling to take advice from anyone; and I hasten to add that the same accusation is often with justice brought against the clergy in regard to their theological and practical activities. In both cases this is often a mere libel without any foundation of truth. Also, doubtless, in a few instances, with men of grand and masterful calibre, there is sufficient reason for the high ground they take; the force they bring to bear upon the advancement of their art justifies to a great extent the obedience and the sacrifice they exact from their friends. Even so, Carlyle was "gey ill to live with," yet the "French Revolution" could hardly have been produced by a man of milder temperament. The pity of

it is when the small men only imitate the intolerance of the big men, without possessing any of their strength and insight; when the assumption of knowledge that no one ought to contradict is merely bombast and swelling. Such empty pretences only make him who claims them unwilling to learn and to go forward in his art. "None are so empty as those who are full of themselves." At the same time, such a man becomes a nuisance to all with whom he has to act.

The priest-musician, around whose personality Browning has woven his poem, might perhaps stand as a type of this bland self-satisfaction, this weak egotism, that is sometimes the bane of minor musicians. All the same, taking the man at his best, our poet makes him express what really lies at the heart of the most spiritual of all arts.

"We musicians know!" Music, for one thing, gives a vision of the sweetness, the affection, the peace that conceivably might always reign in our souls. Somehow, it expresses the fairest possibilities that are to be found in humanity. By a miracle it springs far away from what, maybe, were the contracted sympathies of the individual who brought it into existence; at least, it expresses his ideal and not his own, possibly very defective, character. So such works as "Die Meistersinger" and Verdi's "Falstaff" bring us into the very centre

of bright, happy home life, or charm us with an innocent gaiety that " finds us young and keeps us always so."

What is more, music seems at times to impart to us " authentic tidings " of the timeless, spaceless world of goodness and of spirit that lies beyond the confines of our mortal prison. I need not recall how Newman speaks, in one of the noblest sermons ever written, of the way in which " awful impressions from we know not whence," and " echoes from our Home," can come to us as we are listening to grand music.

Let me mention a passage in the works of one of the greatest of all composers that has always seemed to me a supreme instance of the magical enlightenment produced by a few notes of sound.

In Beethoven's " Eroica " Symphony we have, first, the life story of the hero—his struggles and his conquests. Then comes his vast funeral procession, amid the sorrow and the applause of a nation. Next follows the somewhat enigmatical Scherzo. I would interpret it in this way. We, as it were, visit the hero's grave in the midst of a deep forest. Nature is rejoicing in the full glory of summer : she is, as ever, careless of man and his agonies. The wind rustles in the trees, the light flickers among the leaves, and birds are singing. Then the only brass instruments appropriate to such a sylvan scene break in. The hunters' horns are heard ; their peculiar timbre produces tones that seem to be charged with

strange memories of bygone events. At first they are joyous, then they sink down into a mysterious harmony that speaks in a quite indescribable way of the eternal background that lies behind this world of sight and sense.[1] It is only for a moment that the door has been opened. We go back to the woodland scene. But we have been told, nay, we have been helped to perceive, that the transitory glory of nature is not everything. Behind it all there is an unchanging world where spirit ever abides. After this movement comes the perhaps less satisfying Finale; but, as it triumphantly moves to a close, we have visions of the immortal hero still engaged in new efforts and more glorious victories.

Yet, whatever the discoveries are that come to us through this strange power of sound, we are only shown something that is in a sense already a part of ourselves. We, it is true, seem to be led into a larger continent of existence. We see the landscape more clearly and completely. All the same—we have been there before! So, as that beloved prophet whom we have lately lost—Henry Scott Holland—has said: "We are surprised. Yes! but we are not surpassed, we are not outdone, we are not dismayed or disappointed: still we have it in us, we are assured, to be all that the music can ever

[1] "Here is a feeling of infinitude or eternity such as is conveyed by no other passage, even in Beethoven's works."
GEORGE GROVE.

tell. That huge and intricate life, whose long story it is imagining, is ours, is shut up within our souls : we have felt it stirring, we recognize it all, we understand."[1]

One is always afraid of appearing to talk in high-flown language about the influence of any art upon those who can respond to its message. Obviously the impressions it leaves are evanescent ; they can even do harm, if they lead to dreaming and not to action. Still, one may claim that music does sometimes bring to us self-knowledge of an ineffable and lofty kind. It can suggest the joy of that full self-surrender which we might make in worship ; it can speak of the glory of heroic struggle, the sweetness of self-giving love, the healing virtue of penitence, and the uplifting bliss of communion with the unseen. Thus it reveals something new and unknown about the illimitable perceptions and the mighty capacities that lie dormant within the little world of each human soul.

If, indeed, we have here an influence capable of affecting men in these wonderful ways, a wise choice and a right use of music in public worship must be of vital importance.

[1] "Logic and Life," p. 51.

CHAPTER II
MUSIC IN PARISH CHURCHES

HOW MAY THE ART OF MUSIC BE USED TO MOST ADVANTAGE IN THE SERVICES OF OUR ORDINARY CHURCHES ?

HERE it must be remembered that we often have to provide what is wanted from humble and imperfect material. Yet, if our ideals are sensible and right, results of moving beauty may be obtained ; just as the folk-song may be as lovely in its way as some great orchestral symphony. Only we must not try to go beyond the limit of our means. One of the most fatal hindrances to a wise use of music in Parochial Services has been the notion that every small church must attempt something in the style affected by cathedrals. And this delusive idea has been fostered by the so-called " Choral Festivals," which have thrust upon Village Choirs a kind of music altogether unsuitable for their home performance. The consequence has been that our Church Song has too often failed in those characteristics of soberness, humility and sweetness, of doing small things really well, which might easily have been attained. Instead of these, we have frequently to

listen either to big things done badly, or to pretentious and weak compositions that are only a weariness to any true lover of music.

It will be well, now, to speak of the different parts of our services, one by one : leaving, however, the Psalms and the Hymns for chapters of their own.

CHOIR PRACTICES

These are the solid foundations, out of sight, without which the whole musical fabric of the service is unstable. Dr. Percy Buck, in his book on the organ, has spoken of the exasperating way in which some players seem to take a pride in, so to speak, " driving " their choir along by tricks of emphasis and anticipation on their instrument. " But," he says, " such an organist is unconscious that this ' showing up ' the choir is, in reality, telling the congregation that he has failed to do what he could do if he were a competent choir trainer. Therefore let the choir become accustomed to sing at practice without organ. Unaccompanied singing will improve the singers enormously, and will enable them to acquire a sense of rhythm for themselves." There is just one of the points in which sensible choir training will add imperceptibly but materially to the repose and dignity of a service.

Another matter that lies within the competence of any choirmaster, who will take pains

to learn how to do it, is the making choir boys produce their voices in the right way. When quite ordinary lads cannot sing high notes like F and G with ease, there is something wrong about the method of instruction. But this subject has been well dealt with in books like those of Drs. Richardson, Martin and Varley Roberts. There are also some useful hints upon it in a small work by the Rev. H. Holloway, "The Singing Voice of Boys," published at one shilling, by the Midland Educational Supply Co., Birmingham.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

In some cases we have to listen to the irritating cacophony of organ playing while a bell goes on tolling. When this does not occur, consider what is commonly the prelude to Mattins or Evensong.

As the congregation assemble, they are accustomed to kneel down and say a prayer that they may be fitted for the worship of God. Plainly, then, when the choir enter (as they too have also had their vestry prayer), the office should at once begin while all are standing. Instead of this straightforward simplicity, what do we sometimes find in churches? The organ stops and the choir prayers—perhaps sung to elaborate music—are heard all over the church; then choir and congregation kneel down together just before the opening words of the service are read.

Thus the people are asked to make three separate acts of prayer. Is this necessary or wise? Again, what occurs sometimes is that a clergyman issues from the vestry and in a loud and startling voice announces a hymn, which forthwith is sung in procession.

Here I may be allowed to offer two remarks. It is a great thing to minimise as much as possible the announcements that are made during a service. Of course, hymns, etc., have to be given out at certain fixed points; but, as far as possible, hymn-boards should supply the place of vocal proclamations. (Especially is this true in the Eucharist, where the impression should be produced of a family gathering in which every member knows for himself the part that he ought to take.) Again, when one considers the character and shape of our Morning and Evening Prayer, do not these offices obviously begin with the note of penitence? And if so, can a "processional" hymn be said to fit in at all appropriately with the genius and plan of these services, however suitable this act of jubilation may be elsewhere?

What, of course, is most congruous with the ordering of our Morning and Evening Prayer is that the *natural* voice should be used by priest, choir and people till the singing begins at "O Lord, open Thou our lips." Instead of that, one hears sometimes one of those disturbing "notes" on the organ (just like the prompter's voice at a

theatre !). The choir starts off the Confession on G, and then proceeds to glide down and down. If intoning must be introduced at this point, how much better it would be to start on a low note from which there would be no possibility of falling. The best defence for this practice that I have heard is that of the church dignitary, who justified the employment of a high note for the Confession by the example of the ancient patriarch in lifting up his voice before he wept !

THE RESPONSES

Here is suggested a question that is of capital importance in considering the rendering of our services. What are we to aim at in them ? A number of little fussy attempts at prettiness and brightness ? or a broad, dignified outline, rising to a climax in the Te Deum or the Magnificat, but so planned that the trees do *not* hinder one's view of the wood ? If we decide to adopt the latter and the wiser alternative, then surely the Responses will be what are known as the Ferial ones, or the ancient plainsong. They will be sung without organ accompaniment and they will be the same all the year round.

Tallis's Responses are in themselves excellent music ; but from the practical point of view, as men cannot sing the high notes of the treble part, they involve the silencing of a great portion of the congregation. Considered artisticaliy, the

practice of giving this setting with a prominent organ accompaniment is quite indefensible. Sixteenth-century music of this type was not intended for anything but voices. To treat it as we now so commonly do, even in cathedrals when they have what is described as a "high service," is bad art. Doing this is comparable to the blunder that would be committed if, say, we took an air of Bach and bedizened it with up-to-date orchestral effects.

Dr. Percy Buck speaks with well-deserved scorn of another modern Anglican tradition in connection with the Responses: "A choir that cannot sing 'And our mouth shall show forth Thy praise' without a preliminary bottom C on the pedals—generally a staccato grunt—should speak the words until they can sing them properly." This extraordinary custom, which "The Cathedral Prayer Book" has helped to stereotype among us, can only be compared to the bad trick sometimes practised by the clergy when they are intoning. Such a reader will begin a sentence with a preliminary vocal sound, "Um——We beseech Thee," etc.; and this heavy boom on the organ has just the same foolish effect.[1]

One other point in regard to the Responses may be mentioned. If those which follow the Apostles' Creed are an introduction to the

[1] A soft note must, of course, in most cases be given before the priest sings "O Lord, open Thou our lips!"

Collects, why should the last of them, "And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us," receive special treatment? It commonly is sung with an exaggerated *pianissimo*, a long-drawn-out *rallentando* and what is known as a "full close" in the harmonisation. Here surely is only another instance of that meticulous attention to detail which only tends to obscure the significance of the office as a whole.

So too with the Amens. Some ingenious person once designed a series of different cadences for the Amens after the Collects. This only serves to confuse the congregation and to destroy the need of simplicity and artistic reticence called for in this part of the service. Also, Amens need never be accompanied, unless it is desired to expose the incompetence of the choir. Let them be sung in harmony or in unison on the note taken from the reader. The entry of the organ, probably with pedals going, gives one a sort of mental jump at the end of each prayer and is most unrestful. Thus too one would be saved the curious experience of hearing a priest monotone say on F, while the punctilious organist never fails to come in with his chords in G!

CANTICLES

One is thankful to find how universal the singing of the three Evangelical songs—Bene-

dictus, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis—has now become. Surely this is desirable, as linking us with the practice of the church in bygone ages; and could anything be more suitable for use at the beginning of the day than those wonderful words about "The dayspring from on high," coming to "give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death"? Perhaps also it is some relief not to have to listen to musical illustrations of "Let the sea make a noise."

When the Te Deum is sung to chants, let it be remembered how that hymn consists of three parts,—a song of the world and the church to the Holy Trinity; then, beginning with the words, "Thou art the King of Glory," an act of worship to our Lord; finally, a series of versicles and responses, commencing at "O Lord, save Thy people."[1] If three different chants are used, these points of division can be suitably indicated. In the older edition of "The Cathedral Psalter" a quite wrong place for the second change has been given.

As an ordinary rule, in parish churches the Canticles at Evensong are most fittingly sung to music in which the congregation can join; and, if Anglican chants are used, an effect of dignity and emphasis can be produced by taking this part of the office at a pace slower than that which

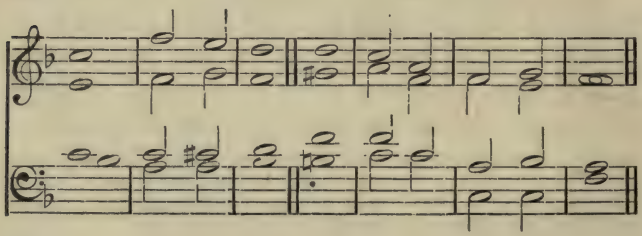
[1] Since 1911 the Te Deum has been printed in the Accession Service so as to indicate clearly its structure.

is employed for the recitation of the Psalms. How salutary this recommendation is will be realised by anyone who notices carefully the curious little roll of the tongue that in most choirs takes the place of the three syllables here italicised :—

"And His mer-*cy is on* | them that | fear Him."

In some churches one notices that there is a pet collection of chants, usually in manuscript and of a specially new-fangled type. It is reserved for the Canticles that St. Luke has given us. Now these ancient songs belong to the primary strata of the New Testament ; and with their strong outcries, such as " He hath put down the mighty from their seat," they obviously demand something virile and bold for their adequate musical rendering, *not* strains written in the idiom of the popular part-song, " Sweet and low."

Here, as an example of what to avoid, is a part of a chant thus honoured sometimes, and it is by no means one of the worst specimens of its class :—



Without dwelling on the trivial sprightliness of the whole conception, one may point out the inadvisability of using discords for each reciting chord, the awkwardness of the alto's leap of an augmented second, and the cheapness of harmonising three notes with a chord of the " six-four " in different positions. But perhaps this is breaking an (artificial) butterfly on the wheel !

Gregorian tones with *faux-bourdons* (or harmonised vocal accompaniments) for the alternate verses of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis may be very impressive, and they serve well to unite fulness of congregational tone and refinement of choir singing. Many fine settings of these Canticles have been written—like those of Walmisley and Wesley, or of Stanford, Harwood and Noble in the present day—and may fittingly be used at festivals ; and some of the older music produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may be charming if it can be given without accompaniment. But much of the music thus at times employed is quite unworthy of its high purpose. Take, for instance, a service often heard, known as Barnby in E. It has its pretty moments, but the very lusciousness of its style is beginning to oppress us, like that of stale scent. Again, in the Gloria of the Nunc Dimittis there comes a long fugue that can mean nothing but weariness and confusion to unmusical people ; while to those who possess some little bit of musical culture it sounds like a weak

parody of what is really great in the art. A performance of works like this gives satisfaction to no one save the singers, and can only make listeners wish that the enthusiasm of organist and choir had gone in some better chosen direction.

ANTHEMS

Anthems serve a useful purpose. If well chosen, they set some words of Holy Scripture (or perhaps a hymn) in a new and devotional light and they make a welcome break in the ordering of our services. Further, they give the choir something to work at : something that will exercise their musical abilities in a wholesome way. But too often we have to listen to spun-out compositions selected for no apparent reason but that they appear easy to sing or are advertised as having been " sold by thousands." Again, I do feel that the congregation is much to be pitied that has to stand during a long anthem of several movements when they have only been informed as to what are the words of the first phrase. No one would think of listening to an oratorio unless he had before him the text of what he was about to hear. Why should people be treated differently in church, when probably the words will be even less distinctly rendered than they would be in a concert room ? With a little forethought it would be quite easy to print the words of the

anthems for each month in the parish magazine. The interest in the magazine itself would often thus receive a much needed stimulus; and instead of having to endure patiently, as best they may, a meaningless succession of melodies and harmonies, our people would be able mentally to take their part in what is going on. And why should not the congregation be encouraged to sit during this part of the service, as they do when the lessons are being read? We do not stand when we are listening to Isaiah xxxv., or even to the great hymns in the Apocalypse when read from the lectern; and it surely cannot be necessary to do this during the anthem.

I venture here to print a short list of anthems that, once mastered, would bear a great deal of repetition. None of them are by living composers; and familiar ones, like Attwood's "Come, Holy Ghost," have not been included.

I. Easy.

Arcadelt.—Give ear unto my prayer.
Attwood.—Teach me, O Lord.
Attwood.—Turn Thee again.
Crotch.—Comfort, O Lord.
Goss.—Come and let us return.
Goss.—I heard a voice.
Goss.—O praise the Lord.
Kent.—Thine, O Lord, is the greatness.
Himmel.—Incline Thine ear.
Himmel.—O come, let us worship.
Novello.—Like as the hart.
Novello.—Call to remembrance.
Ouseley.—How goodly are Thy tents.
Ouseley.—From the rising of the sun.
Walmisley.—From all that dwell.

II. Rather more difficult.

Anerio.—Jesu, once for our salvation.
Farrant.—Call to remembrance.
Gibbons.—Blessed be the Lord.
Mozart.—Jesu, Word of God incarnate.
Mendelssohn.—He that shall endure.
Palestrina.—Come, Holy Ghost.
Purcell.—Rejoice in the Lord.
Purcell.—Thou knowest, Lord.
Tallis.—If ye love me.
Tschaïkowsky.—Hymn to the Trinity (and other works by Russian composers).
Wesley.—O Lord my God.
Wesley.—Wash me throughly.
Also *Bach's* Sacred Part-songs.

Anything of this kind that can be sung *without accompaniment* will make an effective contrast to other parts of the service.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC IN PARISH CHURCHES

(continued)

THE CHORAL EUCHARIST

IF we are at all to follow the precedent set in primitive times and throughout most of the history of Christendom, this is the service on which our best musical efforts will be concentrated. Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to know what music to recommend for such a high purpose. It has been the fashion for our town choirs to spend great labour on producing the masses of foreign composers. But one cannot say that the result has been satisfactory. Their lengthy settings of the Benedictus and the Agnus Dei fit in badly with the plan of our English rite; and though these compositions bear renowned names, they often do not show their writers at their best. Mozart's masses were mostly *pièces d'occasion*, and in them he does not rise to the full height of his powers; Schubert had not the religious temperament; Weber in E flat is far from being great music; the "Messe Solennelle" recalls unpleasantly the Parisian artificialities of Gounod's "Faust."

Anglicans would do well here to follow the lead taken by the Roman Church. The late Pope's desire that this kind of church music should be abandoned showed strong commonsense. It will be regrettable if we find ourselves in the position of those who cling fatuously to a position discarded by others better informed than themselves. To retain this semi-mundane style of church song in our worship, now that the Romans are giving it up, is comparable to the action of the would-be "good churchmen" who adopt the "vesper lights," the masses of altar flowers, the constant use of coloured stoles, etc., just as most of us have come to see that these matters have been improper excrescences upon the true growth of ceremonial recovery.

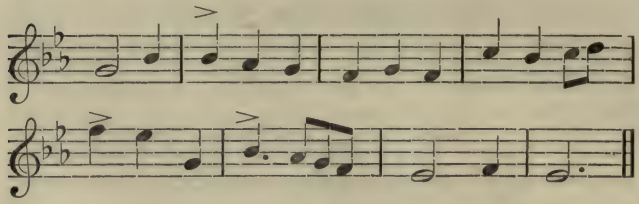
Palestrina's "Æterna Christi Munera" Mass will be an unfailing source of delight when once choir and congregation have learned thoroughly to understand its devotional style. There are a few settings of the Office by writers of the English school, like Harwood in A flat, that can be strongly recommended to competent choirs; and when a good thing of this kind has been found, it will not suffer by frequent repetition.

Much, however, that passes current at present, like Woodward in E flat, is extraordinarily thin and poverty-stricken.

Good forms of the Plainsong, of Merbecke, and of the "Missa de Angelis," in modern notation

and with suitable harmonies, are now published. Perhaps the editions most to be recommended are those issued by the Plainsong Society, by Dr. Harwood, Messrs. E. Wyatt, F. Burgess, R. Shore, and M. Shaw. But printed notes are not enough. Choirmasters ought to take some opportunity of hearing this ancient music properly rendered before they proceed to instruct their Choirs.

Something should be said about the details of the Eucharistic service. Looking at the Responses to the Commandments for the first time, anyone would surely feel that they express humility and penitence ; and possibly it would be best always to sing them to Merbecke's very appropriate music,—just as the responses at the Gospel and after the Sursum Corda should always go to the same tune. Instead of this, what do we find ? There is a service known as Eyre in E flat, which possesses certain good points ; but the Kyrie starts off with a neatly rounded waltz tune that seems to evoke just that atmosphere of unreality which one sometimes finds pervading a fashionable congregation. Anyway, like so many of these pretty little Kyries, it wholly fails to give any representation of the seriousness of the situation involved in the reading of the Ten Commandments :—

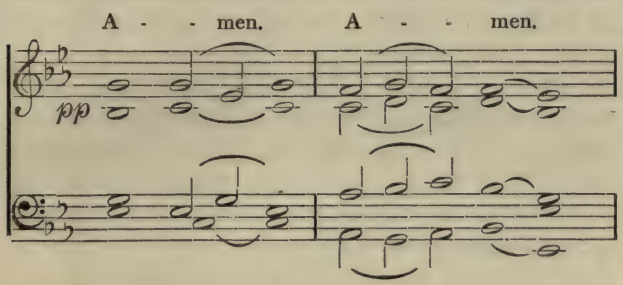


When a mass like that of Palestrina is employed, sometimes the original Kyrie is sung as an anthem introductory to the service, and then the responses are repeated in the natural voice.

The practice of turning the offertory sentences into a series of anthems is rather trying to the congregation, when they might be singing a good hymn.

The Confession should be said with penitential quietness, but not inaudibility. It is an excellent plan to ask the choir and the people to *stand* from the commencement of the " Sursum Corda " to the end of the Benedictus (following immediately upon the Sanctus). This custom makes a useful break in the long period of kneeling otherwise involved, and it helps to bind our worship with olden days when standing was the usual attitude in church.

The Responses at the " Sursum Corda " should be sung in unison, *not* to the very modern sounding harmonies provided in " The Cathedral Prayer Book." If Amen is sung after the Prayer of Consecration, here is a suggestion for it, based upon an " Ite missa est."



A long pause for silent adoration and prayer at this moment is most helpful and does much to bring the spirit of worship into our service. Sometimes one may almost say that such a quiet interval has

> "left so free mine ears
> That I might hear the music of the spheres
> And all the angels singing out of heaven."

If directors of church music understood the devotional value of pauses here, and perhaps after the Blessing at Evensong, they would not be so ready to fill them up with long-drawn-out Amens, with what are described as "vespers," and with organ improvisations. A congregation will love singing the second Lord's Prayer to the plain-song melody, once they become familiar with it. After the Blessing should come some strong and jubilant hymn.

In churches where the claims of the congregation and of the choir have to be carefully apportioned, it may be a reasonable compromise that the Credo and Gloria in Excelsis should be so

sung that everyone can join in them, while the other choral parts of the office are reserved for the more elaborate efforts of the choir. But I cannot help feeling that in England the Eucharist will not become the popular service we want it to be until the congregations are, at any rate as a rule, given more chance of joining in its singing than they now often have.

THE USE OF THE ORGAN

In discussing the question of organ accompaniments, it may seem presumptuous for an amateur to criticise the methods adopted by professors of an art after long experience and consideration. I would only point out that a listener is obviously in a better position to judge of a complicated effect than is the executant who produces that effect. Often one cannot but admire the devotional and artistic results produced by some of our Anglican organists, even when they have to play upon instruments of thin and noisy tone. But this is not always so. Some while ago I went to a well-known church in a Midland city (not Birmingham). Throughout the whole of the service the organist was doing his utmost to keep himself in evidence. He was rumbling upon the pedals, flourishing upon a piccolo, imitating waves upon the swell, or letting out avalanches of tone that swept everything else away. There was no inter-

mission from his efforts to make the listeners, so to speak, " sit up." Afterwards I heard with some relief that these florid performances were generally looked upon by the congregation as being a great nuisance, only no one had sufficient courage to tackle the great man upon the subject.

Let Dr. Buck speak again :—

" Organists would do well to remember the æsthetic value of *contrast.* If the choir can sing their responses and their amens, some verses of the Psalms, and perhaps an anthem without any accompaniment, then the ear appreciates tenfold the sound of the organ when it comes in. But monotonous full tone, monotonous use of the pedals or of the reeds, gets upon one's nerves like any other continuous noise ; except in the case of a hymn that has a full organ backing throughout for the sake of supporting hearty congregational singing."

In a recent work on orchestration, Mr. C. Forsyth discusses Sullivan's accompaniment to a song in " The Yeomen of the Guard," and he very pertinently asks the student to observe " not only the notes which Sullivan has written, but the many other notes which he might have written but didn't." Here is matter for profound consideration by the organist who wants to show that he is an artist. This he will do *not* by constantly keeping his instrument to the front, but by the reserve and self-restraint with which he handles it, only employing its full tones for

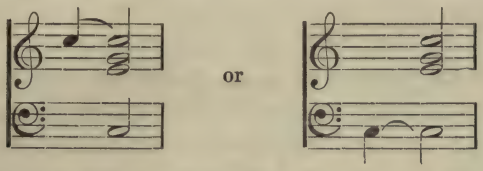
certain occasions in the service when they can be let out with immense effect.

Whenever such support of strong singing is required, it should be fairly continuous. Browning tells of an effect that he imagines to take place in St. Peter's at Rome. (An effect, by the way, quite impossible with the ludicrously inadequate instruments found there now!) The vast cathedral is full of sound, and then suddenly

> "the organ blatant,
> Holds his breath and grovels latent
> As if God's hushing finger grazed him
> (Like Behemoth when he praised him!)."

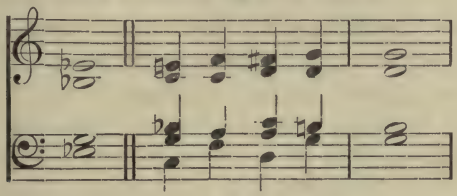
A contrast like that of a sudden drop from a roar to a whisper may be all very well in a solo performance. But when a multitude of people have been encouraged to sing out boldly and the organist thinks it finely expressive to push in almost all his stops at such words as "the blessing of peace," a sort of *débâcle* ensues. The unfortunate singers feel as if the ground were taken from under their feet. They simply stop short—a little catastrophe occurs that sounds badly in the church, though things may appear to be all right in the chancel.

Two points that I will now mention are quite small ones; but an unpleasantly provincial effect is produced when, owing to a want of proper understanding with the choir, an accompanist persists in anticipating thus every entry of the voices:—



This reminds one of the performance of a village band when, if the instruments had to commence on an unaccented beat, the conductor would give a rap on his desk to ensure promptness of attack.

Again, when the Apostles' Creed has to be accompanied, say, in the key of G, and the Nunc Dimittis has previously been sung in a different key, one hears something like this :—



But such forced modulations are as unnecessary as they are annoying. The common chord of C minor with G at the top would form a quite satisfactory link between the keys of G and those of E flat or A flat. In a similar way the common chord of E minor with G at the top will at once enable the organist, when he is passing away from almost any of the sharp keys, to begin his accompaniment to the Creed without further preface.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Certain traditions have grown up within the Church of England during the past fifty years or so, and we conceive ourselves bound to follow them blindly. What I want to insist upon is that, though some of these traditions may be and are for good, yet we shall do well to consider anything modern entirely upon its merits and to reject unhesitatingly all that has shown itself to be valueless. An instance of this subservience to present-day conventions may be found in the idea that every church must have a surpliced choir seated in the chancel. Probably in the mediæval period of that church, and certainly in its Post-Reformation days, there was nothing of the kind. A few male and female singers placed anywhere in the nave, and an unimpeded chancel would be far better, æsthetically and practically. But no! The fitness of things is supposed to demand this imitation of cathedral arrangements. And even in some circles the idea of the all importance of the conventional chancel choir is held so firmly that young women there are dressed up fantastically to look as much as possible like ordinary choirboys in cassock, surplice and college cap! Other instances of this slavish regard for customs of newly arrived origin are to be found in the notion that every sort of prayer used in church must be said on a "note," and by rights on the uncom-

fortably high G ; or again, that works belonging to the school of Stainer, Barnby and Tours (or of their more recent imitators, whose names need not be mentioned) are the proper thing for church use. I am far from condemning indiscriminately all the matters thus lumped together. What I want to assert is that they come to us with no real weight of authority and that if we resolve simply to take them for what they are worth, we may in many cases make a happy escape from modern ruts and find ourselves walking on older and more serviceable paths.

One of the recent " idols of the sacristy " is that we must have a " bright service." What does this mean ? Very often that everything is rushed along at breathless speed, that the organ predominates throughout, is always " going one better " than the voices, that the music chosen is full of sentimentality and almost devoid of strength and character, that a tone of restlessness and strain pervades the whole office. Against all this I am not pleading that the music of our services should be dull and bare, but that its first aim should be to produce a feeling of worship, and next that it should be artistic in the way that it suggests quiet dignity and restraint.

" Majesty grows one with humbleness."

CHAPTER IV
THE PSALMS

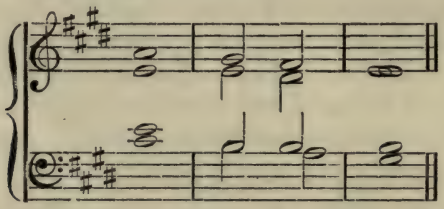
NO attempt will be made here to enter upon the vexed question as to whether the "Anglican" method of chanting the Psalms can be considered satisfactory, or not. The advocates of the use of plainsong, or of more rhythmical methods of pointing the Psalter, doubtless have much to urge that is important. Yet, for good or for bad, the ordinary "Anglican" way is firmly established among us, and there is behind it a long and respectable tradition. One remembers the story of how Cardinal Newman, when quite an old man, crept quietly into St. Paul's Cathedral, saying that he longed to hear once more the kind of chanting which he had loved so well in earlier days.

Taking things as they are commonly found in our parish churches, where the "Cathedral Psalter" is probably employed, it will be well to say something about what often are the faults in the rendering of this part of the service, and as to how in small ways those faults might be obviated.

We must be prepared to admit that our Psalm chanting is, in a great majority of parish

churches, far from what it ought to be. Notoriously it is difficult to recognize defects in things to which we have been habituated from our childhood. The man who has lived all his life in some suburb of London built during the Victorian Era is slow to perceive the dull monotony, the cheap pretentiousness of the buildings by which he is surrounded. So we are accustomed to a certain method of chanting. It is part of the existing order of things, and we never trouble to ask ourselves seriously whether it is in any real sense beautiful or expressive. Yet if we could put ourselves to listen, as it were, *de novo*, we should probably find a great deal that would oppress our artistic sense of what such music ought to be. For instance, the words that go to the reciting note are often gabbled in a wholly unintelligible fashion. An impression is left that " the tune's the thing " and that the preparatory part must be got over anyhow. In other choirs pains may be taken with the recitation, but perhaps the boys have been overmuch taught to sing in what is known as the " kooing " tone. All vowel sounds are the same and consonants tend to disappear: the result is what the French call *tohu bohu*, so far as sense goes. Then whenever you have one or two aggressive tenors or basses in the choir—individuals, it would seem, with lungs of leather and a sort of comb fixed somewhere in their vocal organs—the lower parts of a chant are apt to be yelled

out with disturbing emphasis, and the whole result makes one long that singing in more than one part had never been invented. It must, however, be admitted that sometimes it is extremely difficult for our choristers to maintain an equable flow of sound. Take, for instance, a chant beginning like this :—

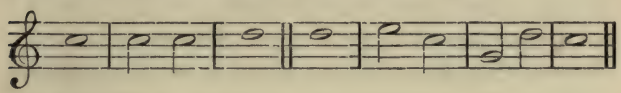


Would it not try severely the skill of a quartet of the best professional singers to recite a number of words to the first chord, without the production of hard and unduly penetrating tones on the part of the tenor and the bass ?

Once more, there is the congregation to be considered. Too often the fact that they exist, not merely as listeners, but as singers entitled to join in what is going on, is forgotten by the choirmaster. On Friday night, we will say, at the practice, everything goes off well. He walks down the empty church and listens in an admiring way to the high notes of his boys. On Sunday he is at the organ, and again all sounds delightful to his ears. But how about those who are down in the church ? Something is heard that may or may not enter into the choirmaster's " scheme

of the weal and the woe " ; but which is practically overlooked, in the way that all fond optimists are wont to ignore what they regard as the unpleasant side of life. And yet the voices of the congregation, if they were provided for deliberately, and if they were properly organised, might prove a splendid asset in the whole effect of the music in our churches !

The singing of the Psalms is a crucial point in this connection. What is the ordinary man to do while they are going on ? If he is a musician of sorts, if he is provided with the " pointing " that is being used, and if he has a book of the music—well and good. But if he is not so gifted and endowed ? Let him try to sing the top of a composition like this and he will soon stop, with a weariful pain in his throat :—



What remains for such a person, even though he has a decent baritone voice, but silence ? Again, though the part to be taken by the women is more straightforward, are they likely to become fairly familiar with it when the Psalms of any particular Sunday are, as a rule, sung only twice in each year ?

Something should also be said about the utter incongruity of these ancient words with the melodies and the harmonies sometimes chosen

for their enunciation. The old-world hymn-book of the Jewish nation, floating down the stream of time, has come to us in the twentieth century. It sets forth the agonies and the exultations of a great people, more than two thousand years ago. Further, it bears with it the long associations connected with its use throughout all the ages of the Christian Church. Its songs and prayers were heard in the catacombs, in the monastery, amid the pomp of the mediæval cathedral, and wherever in the past men have tried to lift up their thoughts to the unseen. Surely there ought to be some flavour of what is ancient and venerable in the music that we now employ for words bringing with them these odours and recollections of the past! Something of the kind is suggested, however faintly, by some of the chants written for cathedral use at various times before and during the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Dignity and seriousness are found in a few more recent examples. But, it must be confessed, that too many of the chants at present in use are characterised mainly by their attempts after prettiness of melody and correctness of harmony. They tend to fall into the category of the "part-song"—a form of composition that arose in an age not very distinguished from a musical point of view, and so they present an idiom quite unsuitable for the expression of profound and world-wide emotions.

Here then are some of the difficulties which beset our path in the endeavour to provide a choral rendering of the Psalter in our churches which shall be dignified and artistic; yet not beyond the comprehension and the co-operation of ordinary people. It is to be feared that but few and inadequate suggestions can now be made towards carrying out such a delicate task. Still, something is gained whenever we realise more fully possibilities that lie before us, and when we see cause for disappointment with any present level of achievement.

Obviously what first occurs to one is that, with most choirs, more time and pains are needed for the preparation and rehearsal of this part of the Office. Trouble should be taken to make the recitation of all the words clear and distinct. The accented syllables should receive but very slight stress, and an endeavour should be made to let everything proceed in an even flow, so that the syllables sung to the "tune" part of the chant will not be much longer than those which go to the reciting note. We come now to a point often overlooked, even in choirs where much trouble is expended over this part of the service. In ordinary systems of Anglican chanting a great many words of two or of three syllables have to be sung to the last note of each half of the chant. Somehow a tradition has grown up that these multisyllabic words must, as far as possible, be rammed together so that

they can be sung to the time-value of one beat. Here are the sort of places in which this objectionable compression occurs :—

in Thy com | mandments.
our fathers have | told us.
kindness is | comfortable.

In the rendering of the 119th Psalm this foolish mode of pronouncing important words, this sort of double or treble postman's rap, is perhaps most in evidence. Such employment of words as mere material to be crushed in anyhow for the exploitation of a harmonised melody is as common as it is unpleasant. Yet, with but a little instruction, the most ordinary choir could be induced to give full value to these final words of more than one syllable. And the careful observance of such a tradition would have real artistic value. It would tend to break down what is the vice of ordinary Anglican chanting—the sense of a uniform, jog-trot rhythm into which everything has, willy-nilly, to be forced.

Well, it may be urged, how are these niceties of execution in singing the Psalms to be attained by an ordinary choir ? In the hour or two for full practice, once a week, there are many other important matters to be looked after. The Sunday Psalms come with such infrequency that they get forgotten meanwhiles. If the greater part of the evening were given up to rehearsing the, say, eighty to one hundred verses

that have to be sung, attention would flag and the attendance of voluntary choristers would fall off. So, perforce, the matter gets neglected, and this important part of the service has to take its chance when Sunday comes round.

One of the most practical ways of avoiding this real difficulty will be found in the employment of the following list of Psalms. It was prepared by the Upper House of Convocation for use on any Sundays when Proper Psalms are not already provided.

		Remarks.
1st selection	3, 5, 19	Morning.
2nd ,,	4, 31 (1–6) 91, 134	Evening.
3rd ,,	43, 84, 100, 122	Worship.
4th ,,	33, 65	Praise.
5th ,,	138, 145, 150	,,
6th ,,	146, 148, 150	,,
7th ,,	30, 111, 115	Thanksgiving.
8th ,,	107	,,
9th ,,	6, 38	Penitence.
10th ,,	32, 51, 130	,,
11th ,,	102, 143	,,
12th ,,	26, 27, 63 (1–8)	Prayer.
13th ,,	23, 91, 121, 125	Trust in God.
14th ,,	34, 42	,,
15th ,,	25, 46, 90	Times of trouble or anxiety.
16th ,,	77, 86	,, ,, ,,
17th ,,	48, 133, 147	The Church of God.
18th ,,	2, 72	The extension of God's kingdom.
19th ,,	47, 67, 87, 96	The extension of God's kingdom.
20th ,,	49, 73	The hope of a future life.
21st ,,	1, 15, 101, 112	The blessedness of the godly.

Of course the proposal thus made has no authority attached to it. But in some dioceses

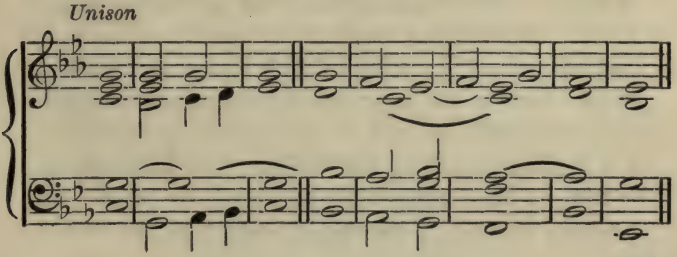
permission has already been given by the Bishop to use these selections, and probably such sanction would as a rule be given. Great advantages lie in a departure like this from our ordinary practice, for the present order of Psalms in the Prayer Book is all right in cathedrals where there is a *daily* singing of the Office. But in parish churches, where the majority of the worshippers are only found on Sundays, the result is not satisfactory. Some of the Psalms that get thus selected are not specially suited for use in Christian worship, and they most of them come too seldom to grow really familiar to our congregations. If, say, one of the selections of Psalms were carefully prepared and used every Sunday, for a month or for two months, choir and people would get to be at home with the words and with the method of rendering, in a way that is now quite impossible. And these grand old words would not suffer through frequent repetition—any more than the Venite does by its daily use.[1]

Something ought to be said about the part to be taken by the congregation. This could be much better provided for if there were more unison singing, or singing in unison and octave, than there is at present. Also with most country

[1] A table of "Proper Psalms" for every Sunday in the year has also been issued by Convocation. But I cannot help feeling that the "Selections" are likely in many instances to be more useful—just because of the reiteration that they will encourage.

choirs, and with indifferent town ones, the gain in artistic effect would be simply enormous. But even the best choirs should more often employ that method. The writer of this article never, to his mind, heard Anglican chanting so impressive as he did one Sunday evening in Lincoln Minster, when the professional choirmen sang the psalms in unison, very deliberately, and to solid, well-chosen chants. Often the greater part of a particularly solemn psalm like the twenty-second ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?") may be sung with great effect by boys and men, alternately, in unison.

Another suggestion may be made about the one hundred and thirty-seventh psalm ("By the waters of Babylon"), though it is not included in the "selections" just mentioned. This lyric of supreme sorrow and fierce desire for retribution sounds very expressive when it is sung quite slowly, and with a sort of tragic accent, to an adaptation that someone has made from the First mode plainsong chant.



The practical difficulty, of course, arises that choirmen, as a rule, have a rooted objection to unison singing. But this feeling is often due to the fact that the chants used have been badly selected—without proper consideration of the limits of the tenor or the bass voice. Mistakes of this kind must be carefully avoided. Then, an appeal can be made to the singers to fall in with what, to any unbiassed listener, will probably seem far more accordant and beautiful. If, in the psalms that are sung in unison, an alternation is arranged between the voices of the boys and those of the men, then a further advantage appears. The difficult problem of how the congregation are to join effectively in this part of the service is at once solved. Either through the means of congregational practices, or by directions given out in some other part of the service, the men can be taught to sing with their representatives in the choir and the women to follow the boys.

And even where this plan cannot be followed, a very decent effect may be produced, if only the melodies of the chants and, in particular their notes for reciting, are kept well within the ordinary vocal register. Then from the bottom of the church (which is always the place where musical effects should be judged), what you hear is a large body of unisonal tone with the distant harmonic backing of the choir and the organ. A musical purist, or anyone devoted to the ideals

of cathedrals, might find fault. The unprejudiced music lover would say that the result was impressive, and far more artistic than when scraggy part-singing is pushed to the front.

In this and in other ways that would suggest themselves to thoughtful clergy and choirmasters, the rendering of the psalms in public worship might surely be made far more expressive and interesting than it is at present; especially if the mass of material to be handled were reduced by the use of appointed selections. It is not suggested that touches of modern sentimentality should be brought into the performance of these songs of the Hebrew Temple in far-off days; only that there should be nothing perfunctory and ill-considered about the way we use them. For instance, the fifty-first psalm ought to be given with serious music and slow singing, in a way that will wholly differentiate its sense of heartfelt penitence from the brave assurance of the words that follow—"Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant?" Broad, massive effects of contrast are needed: never niggling bits of pretty sentiment.

The Psalms are a splendid heritage from the past, and they are dearly loved by English Church-people. Our music ought to do more to interpret the grandeur and the expressiveness of this noble feature of our services.

CHAPTER V
HYMNS AND HYMN TUNES

OUR PRESENT TRADITIONS

RATHER less than half a century ago a number of hymn tunes—written mainly by four men, Stainer, Dykes, Barnby and Monk —sprang suddenly into popular favour. Through the 1889 edition of "Hymns Ancient and Modern," the work of this Victorian school of writers, as we may call them, has practically captured the Church of England. Indeed, a competent observer declares that at the present moment this particular hymn-book is being used in ten out of twelve of all our churches. The statement is remarkable, but it seems to be made on good authority. Also one should note what a large proportion of the tunes in this book were written by the four men of whom I have spoken, and how their tunes are more commonly employed than perhaps any others. Only last year a new hymn-book was brought out in the interests of the Evangelical school of thought, and it may be noticed that this book reflects all the characteristics of the "Victorian school" in an accentuated way. The tradition so established is obviously very much alive and it has been

adopted eagerly by all sorts of religious denominations. Church music in England has thus been, whether for good or for bad, in many ways quite revolutionised during the memory of many of us.

Sweeping and almost pontifical condemnation of the kind of hymn tunes thus originated is now heard in some quarters. They are anathematised root and branch for their trivial melodies and their effeminate harmonies. This, I am sure, is going too far. The men whom we have spoken of, and others associated with them, had unquestionably a real gift for writing expressive melodies that also are emphatically singable. One may wish that their powers had gone in some different direction; but, indisputably, their achievement was a real one. Such tunes as those which we commonly sing to "Eternal Father," or to "For all the Saints," have faults that may appear to be obvious; yet, in either their thin or perhaps rowdy way, they do set out certain emotions that everyone can understand. Their intervals and their general lilt have made an appeal to which the popular taste of English people has responded far and wide. Whether that appeal is only a matter of temporary fashion remains to be seen. Meanwhile, some of these settings are not to be sneered at or altogether discarded. I, personally (to give one or two instances), always feel that Stainer's "Hail, gladdening Light" is a fine piece of work; the

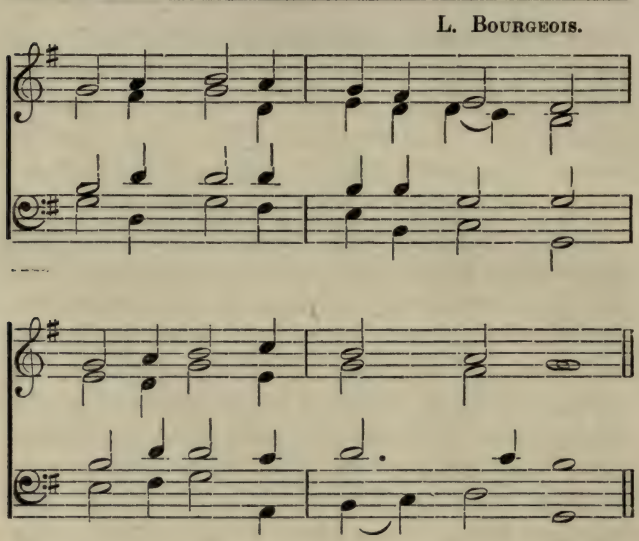
upward and downward sweep of Dykes's " Praise to the holiest in the height " seems to me very moving, and if his " Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty " is taken slowly—and if you forget that the opening phrase is lifted from " Wachet auf "—the effect is really impressive; and Ouseley's " The radiant morn," with its melodious tenor part, is surely an admirable expression in music of the feeling of the words to which it is allied.

In trying to place aright in our estimation the worth of these tunes as a whole, something may be learned by thinking of the results of another and a contemporaneous movement that took place during the Victorian Era. During the same quarter of the nineteenth century the restoration of ancient churches and the building of new ones was undertaken vigorously, and the methods of carrying out these operations were largely those of a " school,"—the following a tradition established by leading practitioners like Gilbert Scott, Street and Butterfield. For all the enthusiasm and care bestowed by such men upon their work, most of us cannot now help groaning over the blunders that then were committed. We lament, for instance, the fatal attraction towards the pretty, and even the garish, shown in the kaleidoscopic stained windows and the restless pavements that then were placed in our sober churches. The gaudy brick and tile decorations that Butterfieldsome-

times ventured to put into an ancient building are really quite sickening. Not at all dissimilar is the vulgar lusciousness of a tune like that of Dykes's for " The Pilgrims of the night," or the cheap " world-weariness " that we find in others which perhaps had better not be specified.

Much might be said about the un-English character of the style of music thus foisted upon us. It obviously owed much to the influence of foreign composers; to men such as Spohr and Gounod, whose work is of very dubious worth. In the " sixties " of the last century, a sugary effusion like Gounod's " Messe Solennelle," appeared to open a fresh door of expression to some of our composers. It encouraged them to say, Away with the austerity and the restraint of harmony and melody in older styles! Here is a new and up-to-date manner that will enable us freely to set out sweetness and sentiment, whether in psalmody or elsewhere!

Again, in Victorian hymn tunes a good-bye was said finally to those irregularities in time-measures which so often were a noticeable feature in the older work of this kind. Nothing like the variety of rhythms found in earlier days entered into the philosophy of these new writers. Here is an example of a sixteenth-century tune that is quite captivating in its changes of time, and it really is not difficult to sing :—



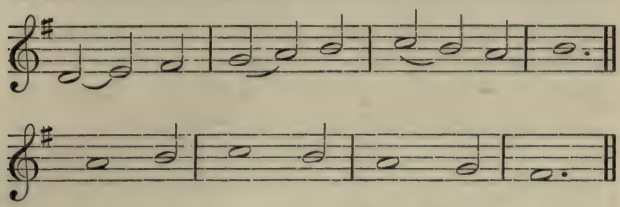
Also the semibreves with which it was customary to begin many tunes of " long " and " common " metre were entirely discarded. These prolonged starts and conclusions of each line were probably not rendered in exact time, but they gave to the untrained singers of a congregation opportunities for taking breath. They also served an artistic purpose in the way of preventing anything like a mechanical recurrence of accents. It is astonishing how much better tunes, like " Winchester," or " Dundee," sound when they are rendered in their original form. After listening to one of them, and then perhaps hearing Stainer's setting of " The God of Abram praise," or Barnby's

" When morning gilds the skies," you feel that you have passed from old days of seriousness and peace to times when the clank, clank of machinery indicates how we ought to get through life. Along with this desire that a metronomic exactitude should be maintained throughout the whole of each verse came a feeling that quickness—or, as it got to be called, " brightness "—was essential in singing hymns. Dr. Frere, in the preface of " Hymns Ancient and Modern," tells us that in the eighteenth century " as regards pace, it is pretty certain that the slowest singing of to-day would then have seemed fast ; and our modern habit of treating psalm tunes as if they were to be sung through in strict time would have seemed inartistic and unpractical." He admits, however, that this increase of speed is inevitable in the case of many of the works that bulk so large in his book ; the old stateliness would not agree with what he tactfully characterises as " the somewhat slender fabric of the melody and harmony " in modern tunes.

Here again we may find a parallel in the practice of the architects who restored so many of our ancient parish churches. These men seem to have had no conception whatever of the æsthetic value of open, unoccupied spaces in a building of this kind. Even where village requirements were small, the unhappy church must be choked up in every part with oak or pitch-pine seats. The chancel might have looked stately had it

been left empty ; but, in accordance with a conventional sense of propriety, it was bound to be stuffed with choir stalls, desks for the clergy, gas standards and an organ. Brought into this fussy, congested condition, the poor building was now said to be " appropriately furnished." In much the same way all sense of dignity, largeness and repose has been crowded out of our hymn singing. But a special exception to this generalisation about the kind of music we are now considering should be made in the case of Dykes's expressive tune for " O come and mourn with me awhile."

Something may now be said about Victorian hymn tunes from the more technical aspect of their craftsmanship. However we may recognise the singableness and tunefulness of some of the best examples, it cannot be said that their composers display much faculty of developing a theme or building up an orderly structure. Nothing of this power is shown that is at all comparable to what is found in Welsh tunes or more distinctly in Irish folk-songs. One example to the contrary may be cited. In the well-known tune for " Pleasant are Thy courts above " we have an example of a sort of ordered form, and the entire melody is ingeniously derived by means of inversions and augmentations from the phrase enunciated in the first bar :—

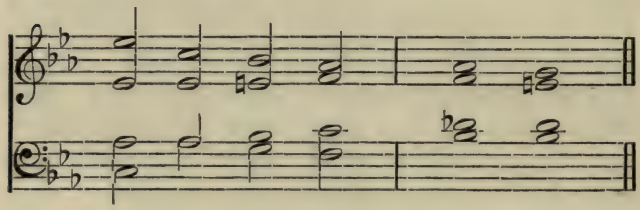


Yet the whole affair is unendurably tedious : the banal effect of this poor little theme of three notes of the scale is only brought home more and more by its varied reiterations.

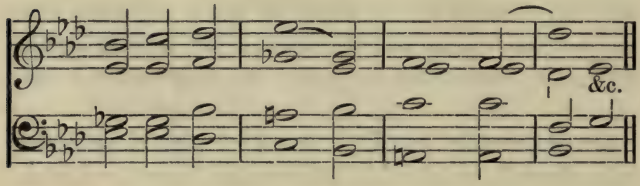
Another point is this—the sound principle that a hymn tune ought to be a self-contained melody enriched by suitable counterpoint, but in no way dependent upon, or unintelligible without, harmonic support, was altogether forgotten. Look at tunes like those of Dykes for " Lead, kindly Light " and for " Lord of glory who hast bought us." Obviously they are part-songs, whether you admire them or not. A good folk-song, or chorale, or old English psalm tune, will have meaning and vitality, it even may sound most impressive, when it is sung by a lot of voices in bare unison. Thus rendered, the tunes of which we are speaking convey much the same feeling of incompleteness that must have been produced when a dignitary of the eighteenth century allowed himself to be seen without his flowing wig.

English people are supposed to take their pleasures sadly. That sociological theory may

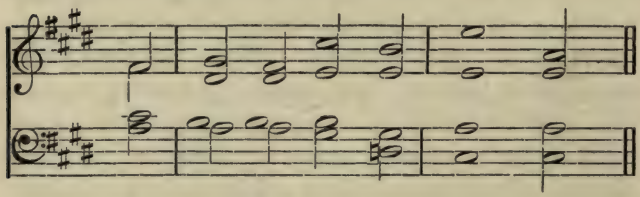
explain why they have gulped down the cheap melancholy that so often pervades these tunes. Stainer persuaded them to relish morbid chromaticisms, such as :—



or doleful intervals like these sixths :—

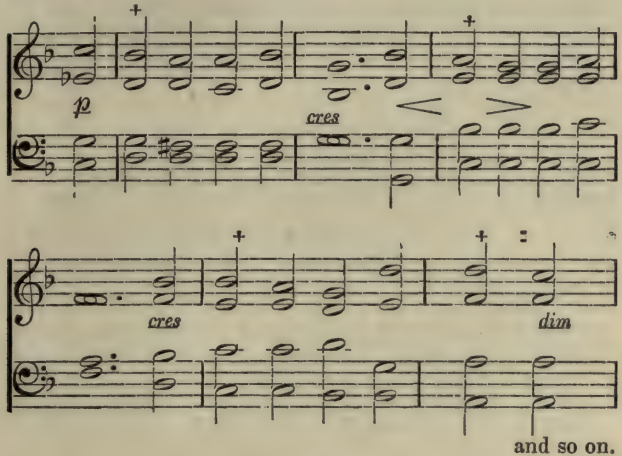


or what would be called the heart-sick yearnings of these unprepared discords :—



But the prize for what is feebly feministic in such work ought surely to be given to the writer of this extraordinary collection of dismal

suspensions—about as lugubrious as the sight of a modern hearse—in " A few more years shall roll " :—



And, by the way, surely the *nadir* of dull part writing is to be found in the alto melody of " Abide with me." Apparently this has been designed for a voice only to be trusted on D and E, with an occasional venture up to F.

An objection may be raised to such criticisms because no reference has been made to the work in this line of certain other contemporary composers,—men like S. S. Wesley, Gauntlett, Goss and Steggall. I have omitted mention of them, because they hardly were in the full stream of the movement we have been considering. To a large extent they adhered to older and stronger

methods of writing. And obviously it has been well to think of the new departures as shown in their most pronounced form. Also the sort of tunes that have been under consideration will be found, at this moment, to preponderate in most choir lists. Is the influence thus exercised upon our ideals of church music for good or for bad ?

Something has been said about the relation of these particular Victorian composers to the contemporary work of church architects. Perhaps another architectural comparison may be drawn of a different kind. We are all familiar with the spectacle of a village church covered to a great extent with growths of ivy. Some people would say, How romantically beautiful this looks ; instead of bare walls, what a lovely tapestry of verdure ! The building thus takes on an aspect of venerable age ; though possibly the creeper may have spread and spread in comparatively few years. But the archæologist and the architect feel quite differently. They would urge, How deplorable that this parasite should have been allowed to cover up all the points of interest in this ancient structure ! Worse still, it is slowly eating into the stones and the mortar ; it is actually destroying the soundness of the walls.

Here, it seems to me, is a simile that no one can complain of as being unfair. Those who desire to retain hymn music " as she is sung " in most of our churches at present ought to be

satisfied, for I have thus credited their Stainer-esque and Barnbyish art with just the qualities that are claimed for it,—of sentimental picturesqueness, of appeal to the ordinary person's fancy. On the other hand, exactly as the ivy not only hides but also defaces the priceless old work around which it clings, so this new art has tended to obscure the work of the old psalmody and to take all point and force out of our rendering of that grand heritage from the past. A sprightly melody like that used for "Thou art coming, O my Saviour," must, as I have said before, be taken quickly, and with no gaps in it for unpractised singers to catch up their forces. Otherwise it would seem as if a sparrow were trying to poise in the air like an eagle. Inevitably choir and congregation feel that the same kind of performance should be applied to every kind of hymn, if it is not to be voted dull and laboured and heavy. Accordingly we hear German chorales, like "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," and even "Now thank we all our God," raced through at a preposterous speed and with meticulous precision. The result would be ridiculous were it not sad.

Probably most of our churchgoers, if they spoke the truth, would say that what they look for in hymn singing is something equable and unsurprising; any emotion that is expressed must be only of the most conventional type, and preferably of the pathetic rather than of the

strenuous order. They are, as it were, habituated to the pretty mantle of soft green that has spread over the building; they would be rather upset if the strangeness of the gargoyles and the rudeness of the masonry stood revealed in their naked ruggedness.

Are we then who have other views, at once, whenever the chance comes, ruthlessly to cut away all the ivy that during the last two generations has overgrown the fabric of Church song? Not so, surely. We must remember that, to the eyes of many, this artistic excrescence (as people like Dr. Ernest Walker would seem to regard it) is very dear. Still, we may patiently try to minimise the effects of the mistake that we feel has been made. We may at least insist that the disfigurement shall not spread any further; and we can work gradually to remove its bad consequences by educating our congregations to feel the nobility and the grandeur of those older forms of ecclesiastical music that have been overlaid and forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

HYMNS AND HYMN TUNES

(*continued*)

PRACTICABLE REFORMS

WE have all heard how, in former days, patriots, soldiers and martyrs have been heartened for their tasks or for their sufferings by sacred songs. If we hold at all that poetry and music can have good or bad effects upon the soul, then no one can say that it is trivial or needless to enquire from time to time as to the fitness of the kind of hymns and hymn tunes that are used by people at their most impressionable moments. The effects, especially upon the young, of asking them to sing in church effusions of pious feeling that are morbid, unreal, or feeble, may be most disastrous. Some of the complaints made about the unsatisfactory character of present-day religious belief and practice may well be due to a mistake like this—if it has been perpetrated.

Those on whom the selection of hymns for use in our services devolves have indeed a serious task laid upon them, when the choice has to be made from one of our ordinary hymn-books.

They would have a rude awakening as to the responsibility of their duty if they were to read what is said upon this matter in a recently published little book, called "As Tommy sees us." The author, a Presbyterian chaplain, after mentioning some of the effusive and effeminate hymns now in common use, says: "Our religious appeal to men must be a call to utter honesty. Whether men are honest or not, they think of religion as a thing that involves honesty. But if we accompany our appeal with a request to utter words which would be dishonest, we undo our work and disgust the very men whom we want to win. God made our men of stern virile stuff for the most part. And He sent them a Saviour who was also made of stern virile elements. If we offer to men a soft caricature of that heroic figure they will go away."

The compilers of our popular hymn-books would seem to have had vastly different considerations in mind when they made their selections. How much unreality there is for men and women, enjoying vigorous health, in such sentiments as "Weary of earth," "Far from my heavenly home . . . Fainting I cry," "Here in the body pent," and so on! Read over, in this light, strains such as "Thou art coming, O my Saviour," or "I could not do without Thee," and you cannot help feeling that they are mainly compounded of feministic gush. Much of what we sing during Lent is quite unsuitable for the

usual congregations gathered in our churches. Think again of the fatuity which asks a crowd of children full of the buoyancy of life to declare that they long for

> "A rest from every turmoil,
> From sin and sorrow free,
> Where every little pilgrim
> Shall rest eternally."

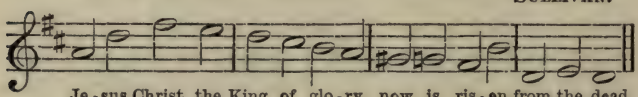
The compiler of a choir list will indeed have to be very drastic in his omissions, will have to ring the changes upon a comparatively small number of really sane words, if he is to make a satisfactory selection from a book like "Hymns Ancient and Modern," at any rate in the older edition. A valiant attempt to provide stronger elements, to give hymns that bear upon national life a common duty, has been made in the "English Hymnal." One wishes that some such book (on the lines of "In hoc Signo") could be issued that would attract others beside definite High Churchmen.

The author of "As Tommy sees us" offers also some wholesale remarks upon Hymn Tunes. "It appears to me a disastrous thing to use jingling and cheap tunes for the praise of God. Men will go away humming such tunes, and may therefore appear to like them. But they are no help to reverence. They cheapen religion. There are hymn tunes which musically belong really to the music-hall, and men will hum them just as they hum rag-time. But it makes for no

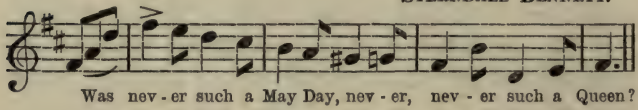
good end to get religion associated with what is artistically unworthy."

Now this writer, the Rev. A. H. Gray, may here have been thinking primarily of certain collocations of notes with "tum-tum" harmonies that are found in Mission hymn-books. But what he says about the close association of the type of music heard in the music-hall (or the provincial concert room), and that inflicted on us in church, is constantly true. The element which they both possess in common is that of weak sentimentality. Take what always seems to me a suggestive instance of this affinity. Here is part of a tune we have to sing at Easter. Notice how closely it corresponds with the dance tune in a concert-room piece of the same period.

SULLIVAN.



STERNDALE BENNETT.



One here does not object so much to the unconscious plagiarism, as to the frame of mind which deliberately chooses the idiom of trivial secularity to express what should be profound religious emotion. And, doubtless, anyone

possessed of more intimate acquaintance than I can claim with the rather doleful productions often dear to music-hall audiences, would be able to point out numerous correspondences between the type of tunes there heard and those which we are expected to enjoy (as some people do their ill-health) in church.

Yet a wise selection of tunes is almost as important as that of words. They say that a good woman can sometimes lift up a worthless husband, where a man would fail to improve an unsatisfactory wife. Music, in this matter of Church song, is apt to be a predominant partner. Feeble words are sometimes saved by a strong tune. But when both are pretentious and inane, what is to be done ? When this occurs, I sometimes feel, quite seriously, that the best course to adopt is to close one's book and to distract one's mind with other thoughts not unsuitable to the occasion.

Are we then to have a severe and difficult type of tune, appealing only to musical experts ? No indeed. What could be more popular than the old tunes that we now sing to hymns like " O what the joy," " O worship the King," " We plough the fields," " Of the Father's love begotten," " The three sad days," etc. The " English Hymnal " is full of such things ; often given in better and more ancient form. And one of its great merits is the use that it makes of folk-songs. The early associations of these old

tunes are now quite forgotten, and they bring with them a sense of outdoor freshness that is a great relief by the side of the mannered compositions of professional musicians. Where this book cannot be used by a congregation, copies could be provided for the choir. Some of its treasures might from time to time be united to the old hymns, that will take on a new meaning when they are divorced from certain sickly and morbid settings to which we have unhappily become habituated. The 1904 edition of "Hymns Ancient and Modern" also contains a number of fine tunes, but one objection to this work is that often the voice parts go too high; and, as a rule, it does not occur to organists that they might transpose into a lower key what lies printed before them.

Next, it will be well to say something about the rendering of this part of our choral song in church. A choirmaster must set one of two objects before him. He must either try to encourage broad, sustained singing, in unison, of hymns by the congregation; or, disregarding their efforts as unwelcome encumbrance on the singing of his choir, he will endeavour to produce the elegant effect of refined part-songs. Everything will be sung in rigid time, there will be strong contrasts of light and shade, and high notes will be favoured in order to show off the brilliance of his boys' voices. Yet if he takes the second of these two courses, the whole result is

really disastrous from an artistic point of view ; for in hymn singing the congregation *will* put in their oar, and they have every right to do so,—hence the general *ensemble* is bound to be ragged and patchy. Let me take the three points one by one.

(1) On two occasions I heard " O God, our help in ages past " sung in the Birmingham Town Hall and accompanied by well-known organists. Each of these men wisely allowed *five* beats in each last bar of the first and third lines of the hymn. The unanimity of the vast number of voices was in consequence quite magnificent. Had the singing been kept up to strict time, the last words of these lines must have been chopped off or there would have been irregularity and hesitation. (2) The peppering of " Hymns Ancient and Modern " with marks of expression has been a portentous blunder and they ought, for the most part, to be entirely disregarded. For instance, the hymn " Abide with me " ends with a cry of invincible hope. All the force is taken out of its supreme appeal if finicking little distinctions like these are observed : " (*f*) In life, (*p*) in death, (*cres.*) O Lord, abide with me." And what is even worse, any abrupt softening down by choir and organ chokes off the singing of the congregation and in the church an uncomfortable and spasmodic effect is produced, however elegant and refined things may sound in the chancel. (3) When choir boys are

fairly well trained, they show at their best in notes like the high F and F sharp, and the choirmaster perhaps thinks how fine they sound. But he forgets one bad result of these brilliant achievements. Most men, who naturally sing in unison, are quite unable to rise to such heights; they are fatally discouraged in their wish to join in the hymn, and all the virility and massiveness goes out of the congregation's singing. And yet the rendering of a broad and dignified tune by a mass of untrained voices, singing in unison and octave, is extraordinarily impressive from the artistic point of view which I am now urging. Sometimes I have taken part in services where the Canticles and the Anthem set to trivial music indifferently performed, have produced weariness or exasperation. Then perhaps has come a Processional, which the people have joined in heartily and which has been backed up by plenty of organ tone. There at last, I have thought, is something really noble: now we have an effect that goes home.

So a choirmaster must choose between the alternatives,—encourage unison singing in the hymns throughout the church and you will have a mass of full and imposing tone that any true musician would admire; or concentrate attention upon the choir's rigid time-keeping, expression and brilliance, then you will be astonished the next time that you go down into the nave to find how confused and unsatis-

factory the music of your church seems as a whole.

Much might be done with some forethought and, better still, with the help of congregational practices to make hymn singing more interesting. For instance, let a hymn be sung throughout in unison by all concerned, except in, say, two verses, and let those two verses be given by the choir alone in harmony and without accompaniment. The effect of contrast will be found quite delightful. Or, again, while some well-known melody is being rendered by the congregation, the choir can sing a verse or two in what is technically known as a *faux-bourdon*. That implies a second melody sung by a few voices, while the primary tune is kept going by the congregation and the rest of the choir. Interesting collections of *faux-bourdons*, and of what are known as "tenor tunes," have recently been published. But the experience of the past should warn us against any undue employment of this manner of decorating the People's Song. Why was the use of the organ and of vocal harmonies discarded for so long in Scotland and in the Calvinistic communion? The answer appears to be this, and it is curious. In the sixteenth century it seemed inevitable to almost everyone that, if you had harmonies for voices or for an organ, these accompaniments should move about freely, and very often above the principal melody. Such embellishments proved

disconcerting to the efforts of the congregation. Why then, it will be said, were not the accompaniments rendered in what we should call the straightforward method to which we are now accustomed? For the same reason that our forefathers tried to asphyxiate themselves in stuffy rooms, when they might have slept with their windows open—because it never occurred to people that they might depart from traditional practice. So in regard to the use of harmony. The ship, as it were, was scuttled because the sails could not be set.

. . . . .

Someone may possibly raise the objection that, in all which has here been urged about reform in Church music, I am speaking in the interests of what is called "clerical obscurantism," and that the principles I am advocating would put a stop to musical progress and enterprise in our churches. But that is the last thing I should wish to do, and I am confirmed in my opinion that the present state of things in the Church of England is not really one of "progress" by the opinions of several eminent musicians, who have expressed their profound dissatisfaction with matters as they now are.

Sir C. V. Stanford, for instance, says[1] that the kind of hymn tune now so much favoured "represents for the church the equivalent of the royalty ballad for the concert room." Such

[1] "Pages from an Unwritten Diary," page 310.

tunes, he tells us, "degrade religion and its services with slimy and sticky appeals to the senses, instead of ennobling and strengthening the higher instincts. . . . They are flashy enough to seduce the untutored listener and to spoil his palate for wholesome and simple fare ; much as the latest comic song will temporarily extinguish the best folk-tune."

Without going to these lengths of denunciation, I do want to assert that at present our Church is not moving on satisfactory lines in regard to her music. And the pity of it ! There is no need that our services should fail in this respect. The Anglican communion is no mushroom growth, it has strong roots in the past ; why should it be presented in any aspect as an exponent of poor and ephemeral fashions ? Why must we let ourselves be tied to a style of music that draws its nourishment from the worn-out superficialities of Spohr and Gounod, rather than from the deep soil of Purcell and Bach, and the older forms of Church song ? We have an abundance of good material for the rendering of our music : real devotion and capacity are to be found in the organists and choirs of the English Church. If only they had wiser ideals of what should be attempted, if they could comprehend that simplicity and strength are vastly better than prettiness and sentimental elaboration, something noble and uplifting for all would be produced. The ordinary person attending some

grand service would then not find things too much above his head. And the cultured musician, in coming even to a small country church, would feel—Though the singing is rough and all is of the homeliest, yet the worship here suggests an old-world sense of devotion; the massive hymns and the strong chants of these untutored voices have about them a seriousness and a solemnity which help to show that religion is the one abiding thing in this world of change.

The music of the Church is, of course, primarily an offering to God, and this aspect of its use may seem to have been insufficiently urged here. But, as the present Bishop of Oxford has so well reminded us, all true sacrifices are "sacrifices in which the enlightened and redeemed will or spirit is at work." Music in worship is not a thing *per se*, standing alone. Looked upon as an offering to God, it can only be acceptable when so ordered that it becomes an intelligent expression of human feeling, devotion and aspiration.

Let our Church song become more worthy of this high purpose, let it be stronger and at the same time more restrained; then we shall find that, in its wonderful way, such music can make us "know" something of the fair goodness which might fill our lives, that it can express the entrancing joy of Catholic worship, and can impart some vision of the things that lie behind the veil.

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