

Our Contributors.

Highland Psalmody.

BY J. CUTHBERT HADDEN.

There is a certain kind of mystery about the Psalmody of the Highlands. Some sixty years ago Dr. Mainzer, a German musician, resident in Edinburgh, went to Strathpeffer for his annual holiday. He was a more religious man than professional musicians often are, and he went to the kirk like a Christian. The Gaelic Psalmody struck him almost dumb with amazement, and he at once resolved to make a book about it. He began by noting down from the mouth of the precentor the tunes as they were actually sung, with their "givings out" for the line, and all those traditional turns and embellishments which Dr. Pearce, so long the organist of Glasgow Cathedral, used to call, not very elegantly, the "warts" of the tune. Then, having done this, he wrote the usual dissertation and sent the book out, with its several musical examples, to an astonished world. Mainzer admitted that he was greatly puzzled. The ornamentation of the simple church melodies with which he had become acquainted in the Lowlands was so elaborate that he confessed himself unequal to detecting the original features, and actually suggested that, instead of having the Reformation tunes for their foundation, these Gaelic versions were new and totally different compositions!

The examples printed by Mainzer certainly go a long way toward excusing his error, showing as they do that the Highland musical ornamentation of that time was such as to obliterate almost entirely the traces of an original foundation. But Mainzer, if we may put our trust in a recent collection of "Songs and Hymns of the Gael," edited by Mr. L. Macbean, had got hold of only the very mildest specimens of the Gaelic "warbler." Mr. Mcbean has set down in musical notation all the fourteen tunes which practically cover the range of Highland church music, and the result will be assuredly more astounding to the Lowland musician than the Strathpeffer Psalmody can ever have been to Mainzer.

These tunes bear such well known names as "Coleshill," "French," "St. David," "Martyrs" (Burns's "plaintive Martyrs," worthy of the name), "Martyrdom," "Bangor," "St. Paul," and so on; but as they appear hear they are no more like what are usually sung under these names than the tune of "Yankee Doodle" is like that of "The Cock of the North." Here is what Mr. Macbean himself says of them. He has been speaking of the Highland hymn-tunes which were used in early times, and then he goes on:—

"There is another class of sacred melodies in the Highlands which is very interesting—the Psalm tunes, which differ widely from those familiar to the English speaking world. This is especially true of the small number of very long and elaborate tunes that have been used in the North for many generations, and which are known as the "old" tunes. Their origin is unknown, for though there is a tradition that they were brought into Scotland by devout Highland soldiers returning from the Protestant war of Gustavus Adolphus they bear little resemblance to the Psalm tunes of Sweden and Germany. It, indeed, any such imported foreign music formed the basis of Gaelic Psalmody, the superstructure has probably been moulded by the chants used in the Highland worship before the importation took place. In the

Psalm tunes as we now have them, the predominance of local coloring is very marked, and it may be said that, even more than the unquestionable music of the hymns, these Psalm tunes express the deep seriousness of Highland religion."

Mr. Macbean, it will be seen, starts a theory to account for the excessive embellishments of these old Highland tunes. He suggests that the tunes, embellishments and all, were practically imported from abroad. But that theory is quite untenable, and for the simple reason that the tunes which have been so adorned by Highland worshippers were for the most part of Scottish—or at any rate of British origin, and were used very little, if they were used at all, by the Continental Protestants before they were popularised here. "French," for example, made its first appearance in Andro Hart's Edinburgh Psalter of 1615, and although the name suggests a foreign source there is absolutely nothing to show that the tune was not indigenous. Ravenscroft, the famous English psalmist, printed it in England in 1622, when he classed it among Scottish tunes, and gave it a Scottish name. Of "Martyrs," again, there is no trace whatever until Hart prints it, along with "French," in 1615. Even "Coleshill," which, to use William Black's phrase, is "as Heilan's as Mull," even that fine old historical tune is simply an altered form of the tune "Dundee," and "Dundee" we owe in all essentials to Christopher Tye, an English musician, who printed in 1553 the work from which it was afterwards taken. And then there are such tunes as "St. Paul" and "Martyrdom." The first was certainly not heard of before 1750, while the second was not in existence until early in the present century; yet both appear in Mr. Macbean's collection, with as many florid additions as the older tunes for which on the very ground of these florid additions, he would suggest a Continental origin. The whole of the fourteen tunes in Mr. Mcbean's list must have been used in the Scottish Lowlands almost as soon as they became available; and it is only natural to suppose that they would gradually find their way to the Highlands. There is no reason to assume that the Highlanders adorned the melodies "right away," as the London railway guards say, but it is perfectly inconsistent with our experience in such matters to suppose that the incrustations grew upon them gradually, until they reached the extraordinary ornate form in which they appear in Mr. Macbean's work. We know, a popular melody, when transmitted orally, as it were, from generation to generation, very often, in course of time, takes on a form quite different from the original; and these Highland church tunes, not being rigidly fixed by musical notation, were at the mercy of every individual precentor and congregation, who mangled and tortured them exactly as their fancy dictated.

Of course, the question still remains why the Highland church goes should want to "adorn" their Psalm tunes more than the Lowlanders. Perhaps the only explanation that can be suggested is that the Highlander has always shown a disposition to give expression to what the Ossian calls "the joy of grief," and that this peculiar wailing kind of Psalmody is the outcome of that characteristic of his nature. The Highland "lament," as we all know, is a thing by itself, with no exact counterpart in any other language. The Gaelic race, as Mr. Mcbean puts it has been cradled into poetry by suffering, and its spirit has been bathed in the gloom of lonely glens and northern skies."

Hence the unrelieved and oppressive sadness of its songs and elegies, the most striking and characteristic things in the Gaelic anthology. A people who thus indulge themselves in the luxury of sorrow could hardly be expected to leave the Psalm tunes in the plain, unadorned form in which their composers left them; and so we have these miseries of melancholy which so mystified Mainzer, and must still be a source of wonder to the non-Highland ear which has the good fortune to hear them in a few remote corners where they still survive.

The Ministry of Their Child.

BY THE REV. JAMES A. MILLER.

There came to me yesterday a beautiful day dream. Through the gate of the Celestial City I saw one altogether lovely, and about him were many children, and near him boys and girls playing in the streets. It seemed to me he called to him an angel,—the Angel of Births,—and said to him: "Take down into a home on the earth a little boy. I wish these parents to know the ministry of a child."

Then I saw the angel, as directed, bringing into this home a babe, and the hearts of the parents overflowed with joy. They called his name Ralph and found a new tenderness creeping into their lives as they cared for this treasure, enlarging their thoughts also toward others. They began to know the joy of service, and took lessons in the school of patience. There came to them thoughts of heaven and of things sacred and eternal,—more and more as the frailty of the babe life made larger and larger drafts upon their thought and care.

Again I saw into the Holy City, and heard the King call an angel,—this time the Angel of Sickness. I heard him charge the angel: "Go down into this home and touch Ralph with sore sickness. I want to lay deep the foundations of his life. I want these parents to know better yet the ministry of a child." And I saw the angel, all unseen in the home, touch Ralph sorely with sickness.

Then came the days when parents dropped all work and watched by a little bed, and the nights when all sleep was forgotten in thoughts of a little life supposed to be ebbing away. Then there came the rare joy of witnessing a coming back again to life, and the happiness of hearing again his bright talk in the home. But again there came the anguish of suffering and again the joy of restoration, and so it was for one, two, three years. All the time a tenderness was creeping into the home, a readiness to give of time and thought to others, a greater spirit of self-sacrifice and patience. All the time more frequent and sweeter thoughts of Him who took children in his arms and blessed them, and of the way he would have them live. And other homes began to know the ministry of these parents.

Again I saw into the City Beautiful, and heard the King call an angel, this time the Angel of Eternal Life. And I heard him commission the angel: "Go down into this home, and touch Ralph with heaven's eternal light, and in a little while I will myself come and take him to the Father's house, as I have promised. I have for him a larger life. I want these parents to know still better the ministry of a child."

Then I saw the angel, all unseen in the home, touch Ralph with heaven's light and he was sick unto death. Sorrowfully these parents passed into their Gethsemane. Tearfully they learned to say, "Thy will be