

CHANTS AND HYMNS

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(The Second Part of an Address to the Students of Wycliffe College, Toronto.)

GOOD chanting can be ensured if careful attention is given to the two following points:

1. To clearly articulate the words to be sung on the reciting note, and to accent the syllable or word indicated in all good "pointed" Psalters.

2. To feel an accent on the first note after the reciting parts of the chant; that is, at the beginning of the mediation, and at the first note of the reading.

It is not always necessary to dwell upon the accented note in the reciting part of the chant, this emphasis must not be overdone, but it must be realized; unsteadiness will inevitably follow if attention is not paid to this point.

The speed should be entirely regulated by the time occupied in ensuring distinct enunciation.

The reciting note should not be too high, especially in Psalms of a penitential character or where occasional unison passages are introduced. In a short Psalm, or portion of a Psalm, of a joyful character a fairly high reciting note would not be objectionable.

Keys: Great care should be exercised when selecting chants for consecutive Psalms—there

produce the impression when sung to several words, of causing a distressing effort to the singer. A comfortable reciting note in a chant is a great inducement for the congregation to join in the singing. Extremely bald, and extremely florid chants are equally to be avoided; nor is there the least reason, with our modern resources, why we should choose or retain either extreme. When studying the art of chanting in the early stages, it is very advisable to limit the number of chants—four or five single, and the same number of double chants, with solid, firm diatonic harmonies should be selected, and learnt by heart. The object of this is that the singers may be able to concentrate their whole attention on the words of the Cantic or psalm to which the music is sung.

By degrees the words of the Psalms become quite familiar, and the rules of Pointing and Expression more readily grasped. It is then when chanting becomes a pleasure and a delight to singers and listeners alike.

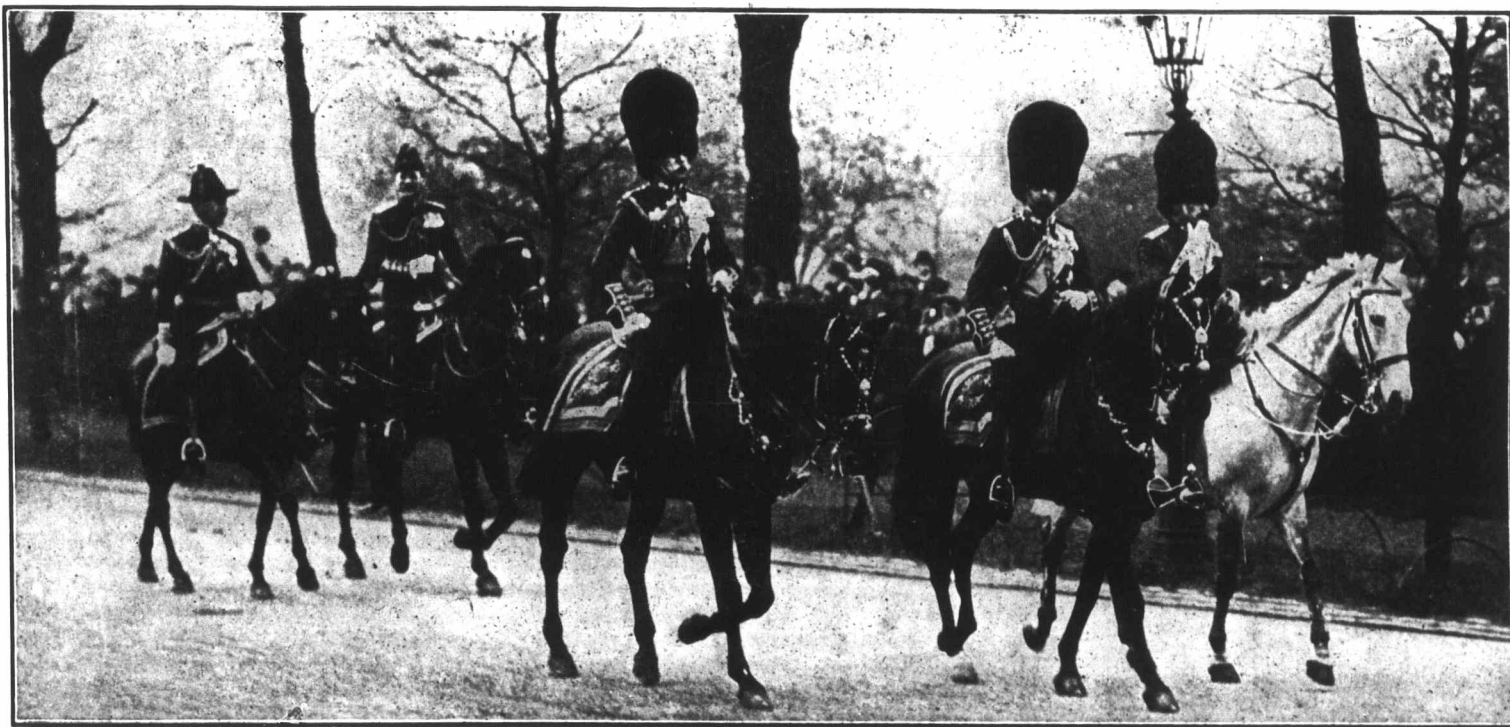
There is a fault which is quite common nowadays—that loud, expressionless, irreverent race through hymns and psalms, which is so often dis-

not antagonistic, but they must always be distinct. Of course every church must so arrange its own music, that the congregation can appreciate and understand what is good and acceptable in one place, may not prove as successful and helpful in another church. Although uniformity is very desirable the general musical ability of a congregation must, I think, be the standard of selection.

The late Sir Joseph Barnby in a paper read before the Church Congress in England some years ago—spoke very severely of the attempt to attract a congregation—at the regular services by mere music.

"Of all the errors which cry aloud for remedy, the worst, to my mind, is perpetuated in the endeavour to draw a new congregation to a church, or to fill up the thinned ranks of a decreasing flock, by the exhibition of startling novelties, and what I should call musical "tours de force"—I should wish music to occupy its rightful place, and no other; nor can I see aught but disadvantage and ultimate failure, in the attempt to make the musical part of the Church service more than an accessory."

Of course to some people, the anthem and the Canticles, and even the Psalms, are looked upon as a mere musical performance, but to others they will be sermons, full of meaning, especially if properly prepared and carefully rehearsed by the choir—not as a performance to air their own skill, but as an act of worship. The Church Concert party is a bad institution as a rule. It is neither good for Art; nor for the worship of the Church.



HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE AND THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT, GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF CANADA, GOING TO HYDE PARK REVIEW IN LONDON.

should be some near key relationship between them. To change from one key to another having no connection with it, is very distracting and even painful to a musical ear.

Perhaps the most common fault in chanting is an inarticulate rush over the words which go to the reciting note, with a sudden pull-up at the first bar-line—a hasty break and a perceptible thud on the first note of the mediation or change, as if some material obstacle like a five-barred gate had been cleared.

The secret of successful pointing lies in making the true accent of the words coincide with that of the music; but with every care, it is not always possible to avoid assigning an unaccented syllable, or unemphatic word, to a note on which the musical accent falls—in such cases it is the part of a good chanter to minimize the bad effect, by keeping the musical accent as light as possible.

In opposition to the opinion which retains its vitality here and there, that all pointed Psalters are mistakes, I maintain that an ill-pointed Psalm is better than the Psalm, not pointed; dire and disastrous confusion is the invariable result of the absence of marks of pointing, and of a blind trust in tradition.

Chants, short as they are, should nevertheless exhibit the characteristics of good vocal part-writing. Again I would lay stress on the fact that the recitation-note of a chant should be well within the compass of each voice, so as not to

guised and excused as hearty singing. This is highly objectionable.

The truth is, that chanting, like everything that is worth doing—is worth doing well. And to become an efficient chanter is not an easy matter! It takes time and thought, and self-sacrifice to master all the little intricacies that crop up from time to time. It is in the matter of detail—in the due regard paid to the so-called minor points that we all should strive to excel.

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

It will, I think, be conceded on all sides that the congregational services of our Anglican Church are based, or ought to be based, on the principle that everybody in the assembly has a perfect right—yes, more than a right, an obligation—to take a part in the service beyond that of a mere listener. The arrangement of the beautiful Liturgy of our Church—the Confession, the Responses, the Litany, all seem to point to this important and fundamental rule. In Cathedrals, and in the larger churches it is possible to introduce one or more choral pieces for the choir alone, sung as an act of worship and therefore to be well rendered, but when the congregation are asked to join, everything should be done to help and encourage them, by selecting music which is characterized by simplicity and breadth of outline and not beyond ordinary vocal compass. The Anglican Church has provided for both uses of music in her service. The two are

The following verses, if very sarcastic, are apropos:

"If pulpit utterance won't suffice
To win the people from their sins
You'll find a method more concise
Than preaching: play on violins.

Or if you see devotion sink
Beneath the organ's solemn tones,
Increase th' attractions of your jinks
And to your fiddles add trombones.

If still the people keep away,
And if to church you'd have them come
There is one effectual way
To catch them—try the kettledrum."

HYMN TUNES.

Some people have a notion that the best hymn tune is that which common people take up most heartily and readily. They adapt airs from all sources, with the proviso that all tunes must be of a strongly marked character and easy rhythmic outline. I agree with the late Sir J. Barnby who traverses this idea. He says: "Church music is distinctly an offering dedicated to God. It therefore requires to be purer and deeper than that which is offered by man for the delectation of his fellow men; and this entirely disposes of the specious argument sometimes used, that because a congregation sings a certain tune with fervour and evident enjoyment it must be good."