

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PSALMODY.

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(Continued.)

We now very shortly ask attention to the Presbyterian music of England.

The first psalm-tune book published in England was "Bishop Coverdale's Psalms and Spiritual Songs," which appeared in 1539. It contained metrical versions of fifteen Psalms, and of twenty-six other parts of Scripture, the music was chiefly derived from Genevan sources.

Psalm-singing was the universal characteristic of the Reformation. It was a common thing for six thousand persons to be singing Psalms together at St. Paul's Cross.

Bishop Burnet says that "Psalms and Hymns were sung by all who loved the Reformation; it was a sign by which men's affections to it were measured, whether they used to sing them or not." The singing of the early Protestants was almost entirely confined to metrical versions of the Psalms.

It was not till two centuries later that Dr. Watts appeared—the great father of English hymnody. "Though," says he, "there are many gone before me who have taught the Hebrew Psalmist to speak English, yet I think I may assume this pleasure of being the first who hath brought down the royal author into the common affairs of the Christian life, and led the psalmist of Israel into the Church of Christ, without anything of a Jew about him. But then," he says, "I cannot understand why we under the gospel should sing nothing else but the joys, hopes and fears of Asaph and David; and consider that David would have thought it very hard to have been confined to the words of Moses, and sung nothing else on all his rejoicing days, but the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptian host." The other most important publications of the time were Day's Psalter of 1562; which was followed by the Scottish Psalter in 1579, Damon's Psalter in the same year, Denham's Psalter in 1588, Este's Psalter of 1592, and Ravenscroft's great Psalter, published in 1621, which has held even to this day a high place in musical literature, being the store-house of our best music. The version of Francis Rous, Provost of Eton College, appeared in 1643, and was adopted by the Scottish Presbyterians as their national Psalter. The tunes in these Psalters are derived in part from German and Genevan sources, but they seem chiefly to have been contributed by English musicians, such as Tallis, Dowland, Morley and others.

They are all of a simple, grand, ecclesiastical character, neither fugue nor repeat appears in them.

The first English tune to which I would ask attention is the common measure one called "Tallis." It bears the name of its author, Thomas Tallis, who was born about the year 1520, and died in 1585. He prepared the "Service Book" of the English Church. He was one of the great fathers of English sacred music,—one of the greatest of English musicians. He was gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and partly organist under four sovereigns—Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth. He appears to have been a pious man. Sir John Hawkins says, "The studies of Tallis seem to have been wholly devoted to the service of the Church, for his name is not to be found in any of the lighter kinds of music framed with a view to private recreation." This tune "Tallis," is a genuine specimen of perfection in both melody and harmony. We will sing it to the words of the 133rd Psalm—the compilers of the English Presbyterian Book have shown good judgment in setting it to the words of this popular psalm instead of that very indifferent specimen called "Eastgate," to which they are commonly sung. Another fine specimen by Tallis, is the well-known long measure tune set to the hymn, "Glory to Thee, my God, this night." It is harmonized in canon, and is known by the title "Canon" in the English Presbyterian Hymn-Book. The term "canon" in music denotes a species of uninterrupted imitation, in this tune the melody and tenor are the same, and so arranged as to produce and reproduce the theme, reminding one of the waves of the sea successively breaking on a pebbly shore.

In such a paper as this we may be at liberty to say a word on the much-vexed Organ question.

Much has been said and written on this lion of musical instruments, the organ. I don't know that I can do better than quote the words of the great Dr. Cumming, of London, Eng., on this subject. He says, "I think the human voice the noblest of all instruments. Organs were not used in the Christian Church till a very late period. The first great organ was presented to Charlemagne by the Emperor Michal. In the Eastern Church organs were never approved; in the Western Church they were introduced amid great opposition. 'Whence,' says a Cistercian monk in the twelfth century, 'whence, after types and figures have ceased—whence in the church so many organs, so many cymbals? For what purpose, I ask, is that terrible blowing of bellows, expressing rather the crashing of thunder than the sweetness of the voice?'"

"My idea of an organ is very simple, and, I think, very true. But before stating it, I may premise that I have no sympathy whatever with the ultra-puritanic views of some on this side the Tweed, or the covenanting prejudices of others north of the Tweed on this matter.

"I do not admire the anile ignorance which hears heresy in the sounds of an organ, or see a Papist in its patron or player. So strong was the feeling in the Church of Scotland half a century ago, that on a clergyman introducing an organ, the aged females that sat round the pulpit could hardly be kept down on its first sound; and the clamour in the parish grew so terrible, that they were obliged to remove it, and the poor clergyman, on leaving the parish for a more suitable one at a distance, was represented in the prints of the day and in the shop windows robed in his canonicals, with a barrel-organ on his back, and his right hand turning the handle, and playing the well-known tune, 'I'll gang nae mair tae yon toon.'

"Yet a violincello, double-bass or a violin, are more effective instruments by far. On the organ, the same key is both the flat of one note and the sharp of another, the transitions are clumsy and abrupt, but the violin not only distinguishes each note and half-note from another by different fingers, but can render the quarter or eights of a tone with unutterable beauty, and pass from one to another with a delicacy altogether unattainable by organ or pianoforte. You have excommunicated the violin, and consecrated the organ, and like many kindred Papal canonizations and curses, on very unsatisfactory grounds.

"But the organ, grand as it is, is nothing to the human voice. The 'Old Hundredth' given by all the voices in this Hall is grander without than with the organ. The organ, in short, to express its true value, is a good auxiliary to bad congregational singing, but, like the use of a crutch, too long used it prevents our walking without it, or, like an ear trumpet too much had recourse to, it renders us unable to hear without it. The human voice is the wonderful organ. Intellect is visible on the brow, the heart is seen looking through the eye; but the soul reveals itself in the voice.

"Man's soul is audible, not visible, as God gave an apocalypse of Himself of old, not in the blazing fire, nor in the bursting earthquake, but in the 'still small voice.'

"The sound of the voice alone betrays the flowing of the inner and inexhaustible fountains of the soul, otherwise inappreciable to man. Mercury may have made the lyre, Apollo the flute, Jubal the harp and the organ, but God made the human voice, and the instrument shares in something of the perfection of the Maker."

In these later days the Church of England has done much to secure both hymns and music for its service of praise, it has drawn largely from the rich mines of the devotional poetry of Christendom, the works of Dr. Neale; Sir Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise;" "Hymns Ancient and Modern," and other more or less important collections have been freely employed. But to the Presbyterian, these works display a priestly tone; a ritualistic spirit, a sentimental type of Christianity, and an adherence to the festivals of the Christian year, which the simplicity and the catholicity of our Presbyterian service does not demand. Still, we must admit that the Church of England has done good work in this connection, but while we admire what is excellent in the service of our Christian neighbors, let us avoid that slavish imitation of the service of sister churches, instead of giving heed to the improvement and development of the principles of Presbyterian worship. Presbyterianism has been stigmatized as a religion unfitted for a gentleman, and thus some have gone over to Episcopacy, that they may sit at ease in

Zion, that they may, in the æsthetic sense of the expression, worship in the beauty of holiness.

Presbyterianism demands every member and adherent, whether lay or clerical, rich or poor, to perform their own part of the work and worship of God; it demands that all should "sing unto the Lord," and not that this should be done by proxy; while Episcopacy, despairing of the efficiency of its clergy, the spirituality of its people, provides fixed forms of prayer, homilies, liturgies and professional organists and choristers.

We do not wish to speak an uncharitable word about our Christian neighbors of any denomination, but we do emphatically declare our love for and adherence to our good old Presbyterian worship, and our conviction is that improvements, where required, are not to be worked out by copying from others (although we may learn much by keeping our eyes and ears open), but rather by maturing and perfecting our own recognized principles. The English "Presbyterian Church" did a good work for themselves and us when they published their present "Psalter and Hymn-Book," which is undoubtedly one of the best in use. In the preface (which is believed to be from the pen of the late Dr. James Hamilton) we are informed that "This volume has been prepared with the greatest care by a number of the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church in England. The first division consists of the Psalms of David, in the metrical version with which all are familiar,—Chants have been added, as they admit of larger portions of the Psalms being sung at once than is practicable with the ordinary music; and worshippers will thus be enabled to use more profitably and enjoy more fully the songs of Zion. Great care has been bestowed upon the music."

It has been almost universally adopted with most gratifying results throughout the Presbyterian Church in England.

The history of sacred music in Scotland claims a brief retrospect. As early as the middle of the seventh century it was required of Christians, whether clergy or laity, that they should give themselves to meditation, either by reading the Scriptures, or by being at pains to learn the psalmody.

In the eighth century the seven liberal arts were divided into two great classes; the first or more elementary of which, comprehending grammar, rhetoric, and logic, was called the Trivium; the second, comprehending music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, the Quadrivium.

Up to the end of the sixteenth century, congregational singing in Scotland seems to have attained a standard of great proficiency, but, by various causes this proficiency was gradually lost, and church psalmody was reduced to that depth of ignorance and depression from which it is only now beginning to be raised. Psalmody began to be neglected during that period which marked many changes in Church and State—the period of the solemn league and covenant in Scotland, and during the last years of the Long Parliament in England.

At this time Scotch and English alike endeavored to make Presbyterianism the national religion.

Believing that the introduction of a new version of the Psalms would promote the uniformity desired, a proposal to this effect was submitted to the Westminster Assembly; the result was that Mr. Francis Rouse's version was approved. This was a great concession on the part of the Assembly, for, on previous occasions, they had stoutly resisted all attempts to supersede the version of the Psalms in common use.

James the Sixth made many attempts to supersede the version of the Psalms in common use, and under took to perfect a new version of the Psalms in metre. This version, published in 1631, after the king's death, was rejected by the General Assembly, who refused to part with the Psalter of John Knox, for they said: "This Psalter is the nation's right; it is known to the ministers and the people; if we give it up other things will go, such as the confession of faith, nor can we accept the new version, which has not been overlooked by the Church. Unmoved by the authority and voice of a king, the General Assembly, in the year 1645, signified their approval of the version of Mr. Rouse so far as examined; before finally accepting it, they proceeded with great diligence and care to ascertain whether it was of such superior excellence as to be permitted to supplant the older version which had been known and used since 1565. Copies were sent down to Presbyteries for their opinion and advice. Committees composed of those most distinguished for learning and poetical taste and skill were appointed,