

## HYMNOLOGY OF THE CHURCH.

BY T. M. DENYRS, B.A.



**S**INGING has always formed a very important feature of all worship, singing in some form, and generally accompanied by instrumental music. The Psalms were without doubt sung to irregular chants or short, simple melodies, accompanied by instruments selected as appropriate in tone to the particular Psalm, the whole body of instruments being used in grand bursts of chorus. Alternate singing from side to side or by choirs of women or boys and of men was frequent, "And Miriam answered them, sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously" (Ex. xv. 21). "And the women answered one another as they played and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. xviii. 7). "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord" (Ezra iii. 11).

Vocal music was nearly always accompanied by instruments. "And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals." Music entered so largely into the private and public life of the Hebrews that its cessation typified utter misery or desolation. "Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the mill-stones and the light of the candle" (Jer. xxv. 10); "and I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard."

Vocal and instrumental music, often with dancing, *i.e.*, measured rhythmical movements, was an accompanying feature of their social gatherings and their processions, whether religious, triumphal, bridal or funeral. Singing men and women formed part of David's and Solomon's court, the winepress was trodden, and the vintage that closed the harvest was gathered with a song. The "timbrels and the dances" of the daughters of Israel typify ordinary peace and prosperity.

That must have been a magnificent service in the temple when a great army of singers, strengthened by the sound of trumpet and psaltery, called to one another and said, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory?"

We read that there were four thousand Levites whose only business was to look after the Psalmody. They were divided into courses of two hundred and forty and five—each course having its appointed time. There were no sermons in those days except in the synagogue. The psalm was everything, but can we imagine anything grander, more fitted to press home the great truths set forth in the symbol and ceremonial of the former Dispensation than those white-robed Levites standing before the tokens of God's presence—smoking altars, golden candlesticks—under the very wings of the cherubim, chanting such psalms as the one hundred and thirty-sixth, one part exclaiming: "O, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good," then another section standing in a different place responding, "unto him who doeth