

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PSALMODY.

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(Continued.)

I have a strong prepossession against the use of secular tunes in sacred worship. Although secular music has been freely introduced into our Church service in past and present days, and it may be quite lawful to do so, yet I fail to see that it is expedient. Wesley says, "the devil should not have all the best music." I don't see that he has. In this nineteenth century, with such ample resources at command, such a store of genuine, solid, ancient and modern compositions from the Hebrew, Ambrosian, Gregorian, Medæval, Lutheran, Bohemian, French Protestant, English Protestant, and modern British and American, etc., we need have no difficulty in finding a sufficient number of good tunes for all sacred purposes, and if others are required may we not rather compose new ones which shall be free from the taint of worldly associations, than adopt this doubtful borrowing and lending policy. But perhaps some will say, the Church has used secular music in all ages:—well, doubtless she has, but how can we estimate how much the glory of her praises may have been tarnished; the lustre of her divine songs been defiled by the use of secular music? If you will use them outside the Church for evangelistic purposes, pray do not bring them inside the Church, let our Church song be like Christ Himself, who though on earth, was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Rejecting, then, what is purely secular, the question naturally follows—How are we to know good tunes from inferior ones, so that we may present nothing but the finest and best in our service of praise. In order to accomplish this essential requirement of good church music, a certain amount of musical knowledge is indispensable. In the plainest manner, therefore, I will endeavor to explain a few simple rules for testing the merits of a plain psalm tune. In the Sol-Fa system we are taught to notice the "mental effects" of the seven tones of the scale when sung slowly in diatonic progression, or in other words to distinguish the particular characteristics of each individual sound, thus, "Doh," is called the resting tone; "Ray," the rousing tone; "Me," the calm tone; "Fah," the desolate or awe-inspiring tone; "Soh," the grand or clear tone; "Lah," the weeping tone; "Te," the piercing or sensitive tone. Let us now take such a tune as "Soldau," a long measure melody of the thirteenth century, and see which of the tones of the scale occur most frequently in the melody, and thus form some idea of its particular character. We find in its melody 10 Dohs, 5 Rays, 6 Mes, no Fahs, 3 Sohs, 6 Lahs and 1 Te, in all 32. Then observe which notes are accented, that is to say, which occupy the first beats in the respective measures into which this tune (like all others) is subdivided. The special emphasis laid on the accented notes of a tune, brings the "mental effect" of the accented notes better out, gives them greater prominence, and enables them to exert more of their own inherent influence in the coloring of the whole melodic structure. In the melody before us, then, we find 6 of the 10 Dohs are accented, 2 of the 5 Rays, 3 of the 6 Mes, 3 of the 4 Sohs, and 2 out of the 6 Lahs.

Thus we find predominating, the strong, resting tone, Doh, the plaintive Lah, the calm and steady Me blended with smaller proportions of the rousing Ray, and the grand or clear Soh; consequently we might in a general way characterize it as a solid, plaintive, calm melody, well adapted to poetry of a didactic or pathetic strain. The principles of melodic imitation require to be studied and understood in order to a correct appreciation of what is good and what is inferior in our sacred music. It is an indispensable feature of a good tune, that its phrases, sections, periods and cadences bear more or less resemblance to each other, in other words, it exhibits a beginning, a middle and an end distinctly its own, and not a patch-work of a few hackneyed phrases, linked together without special relation to each other and to the whole melodic structure. But, while we may not seek to limit or restrain the power of musical invention or genius, or rashly condemn every composition which does not adhere to the strict rules of melodic form, we are warranted after considerable research on the authority of the best writers in demanding from our

church music a reasonable compliance with the laws of composition. This tune, "Soldau," presents peculiar features of retrograde imitation, not easily discerned but not the less striking and real. For example, observe its peculiar use of the notes Soh, Lah, Doh, in the second phrase of the first line,—thus, Lah, Soh, Lah, Doh,—then notice the similarity existing between this and the second phrase of the second line, Me, Doh, Lah, Doh,—then further observe the first mentioned phrase, Lah, Soh, Lah, Doh, replied to, note for note, in the first phrase of the fourth line in exactly opposite motion; thus in the second phrase of the first line we have Lah, Soh, Lah, Doh, while in the beginning of the fourth line we have Doh, Lah, Soh, Lah, thus forcibly reminding us of what we have previously heard in the first and second lines. Also in the first line we have Doh, Ray, Ray, Doh, imitated in the beginning of the third line inversely,—thus, Me, Me, Ray, Me. Then the second line begins Me, Soh, Lah, Soh, which is exactly imitated and replied to in strict inversion by the first phrase of the fourth line, thus, Doh, Lah, Soh, Lah. And further, while one phrase gives Ray, Ray, Doh, another replies Ray, Ray, Me, and while one gives Soh, Lah, Soh, another echoes inversely Me, Ray, Me. This fine old melody is replete in melodic imitation, and exhibits an originality and an individuality which has kept it fresh during the lapse of six centuries, and which has embalmed it for the use of the Church in future generations, when many of our "Oringtons," "Eastgates," "Calcuttas," "Violet Groves," and "Tranquillities" shall have been numbered among the things of the past. We are indebted to Germany, to such men as Luther and his coadjutors, for preserving for us such tunes as "Soldau," and others of early date, and for providing us with a rich store of sacred music and poetry. These men, like many of our French Canadian brethren, had just come out of papal darkness and had just been illumined by that light which we so fully and so freely enjoy. In tunes like theirs, men sang praises out of the depths of grateful hearts; the scales of spiritual darkness had just fallen from their eyes; they had just been released from the fetters of spiritual despotism by which they had been bound, and thus "escaping like a bird out of the fowler's snare," they went forth "walking and leaping and praising God." Another very fine Choral introduced by Mendelssohn into his "St. Paul's," is by "Newmark, librarian at Weimar," who was born in 1621. It is said to have been first sung in the streets of New Brandenburg by a baker's boy; the people listening caught its glorious strains, and it was soon known and sung throughout the land. It is in the minor mode, a key which I observe with regret is falling into disuse. Another fine melody of great richness and beauty, is the hymn tune called "Albert," also found in Mendelssohn's Oratorio of "St. Pauls." It is ascribed by some to "Kugelmann;" its origin is rather doubtful. Time does not permit me to analyze its structure; we may notice, however, that it is built on that grand and prolific theme, Doh, Me, Fah, Soh, on which so many of our finest tunes have been constructed at widely different dates, such as French, Tallis, Caithness, and many others. Some of the finest chorales of the seventeenth century were composed by Johann Schop, who was an organist at Hamburg about 1640. He was a man of great genius and ability in music, as his works amply testify. One of his tunes, set to the hymn "Death o'er all his sway maintaineth," one of his purest and best, contains some remarkably beautiful features of that style of melodic resemblance known as sequential imitation. For example, in one line we have Me, Me, Fah, Fah, Me, Me, Ray; in another, Me, Me, Ray, Ray, Doh, Doh, Te; in another, Doh, Doh, Ray, Ray, Me, Me, Fah; closing with Me, Me, Ray, Doh, Doh, Te, Doh. Thus while one phrase ascends in diatonic sequence, another descends in exact contrary motion, while another imitates the sequential arrangement of one line, by repeating the same idea at the interval of a third lower. Altogether this is a very superior melody, beautifully harmonized, and well adapted to express the mingled feelings of grief and joy which are embodied in the words of the beautiful hymn to which it has been set.

A lecture on this vast and varied subject would be sadly wanting were we to omit a page on the psalmody of the French Reformation. Many of our best tunes have been drawn from this source. Our close identity with the work of French Evangelization leads us to reflect on the many advantages we as a Church have inherited through the faith and suffering of God's peo-

ple in France; and he who runs may read the lesson which the history of the French Reformation plainly teaches, viz., the special duty we in Canada owe to our French Canadian brethren. From Protestant France we have received much in the past, let us show our gratitude by seeking to enlighten her benighted children in our very midst. John Calvin has been described as a man void of musical tastes, but we do not believe that this is the case; indeed, historical facts go far to prove that he was among the very first to recognize the power of music in carrying on the Reformation. One great and good work he did accomplish in this connection; he was the means of introducing the use of metrical psalmody into the reformed churches of France. Clement Marot, a man of considerable poetic genius, had been employing his spare time in converting into verse the Psalms of David. These were taken up by members of the court and sung by them, and indeed by all classes of the people, as "gay novelties" to their popular secular melodies. Calvin requested his friend Theodore Beza to complete the work thus irregularly inaugurated by Marot, and sought the aid of the best musicians he could find to set them to music. Amongst those musicians the name of Guillaume Franc stands in the foremost rank. He added to the collection, which was then made chiefly from the ecclesiastical music of the Latin Church, several tunes of his own composition, amongst others the grand "Old Hundredth," which the best authorities, including Dr. Havergal, agree in ascribing to him. This grand old tune is still universally known, and has been sung and admired by all classes of the people, from the great author of the "Messiah," Handel himself, to the humblest member of our Church. Should we now occupy a few minutes in closely analyzing this immortal melody, I am sure you will not consider the time misspent. Being a long measure tune, it has four lines, each containing eight syllables or beats. This simple fact claims attention at the outset, as it proves its rhythm to be perfectly balanced. Rhythm must be kept equally balanced in any good psalm tune. Many of our trashy though sometimes popular tunes seem to have been lited into existence with utter disregard to the rules of rhythm; indeed, some manufacturers of psalm tunes display an ignorance of this fundamental principle which is actually amazing (see such tunes as "Devizes," "Eastgate," "Wellmore," and others), and insist upon forcing their absurd arrangements on the ears of our congregations, which is one of the great causes of our poor, flat congregational singing. In this tune—"Old Hundredth"—the note Doh occurs nine times; Me, eight times; Soh, twice; in all, nineteen strong tones of the scale, the notes Doh, Me, Soh, being characterized as the strong, fundamental tones of the scale, while Ray, Fah, Lah and Te are recognized as the leaning tones of the scale. Ray occurs seven times, Fah twice, Lah twice and Te twice, giving thirteen leaning tones: in all, thirty-two, showing a majority of six strong, fundamental notes, with a good representation of leaning tones. Then we find Doh four times accented, Me four times accented, Soh not accented: in all, eight strong notes accented; then in leaning tones we have Ray five times accented, Fah once accented, Lah twice, and Te not accented. Thus we have a large percentage of Doh, the strong or resting tone; Me, the calm, steady tone; Ray, the rousing tone, with a fine blending of the grand Soh, the awe-inspiring Fah, the plaintive Lah, and the sensitive Te. Thus we characterize it as a strong, rousing, yet steady and dignified melody. Let us now view it from the other standpoint already referred to, viz.: The rules of melodic imitation. Then notice first the theme, which is diatonic,—thus, Doh, Te, Lah. Observe also the reply in contrary motion in the second phrase of the first line, Doh, Ray, Me; then observe how the second phrase of the second line imitates the original theme at the interval of a fourth higher Fah, Me, Ray; also, the second phrase of the third line which presents the theme in contrary motion Lah, Te, Doh; while the close of the last line repeats the reply of the second phrase of the second line, closing on the key-note, thus, Fah, Me, Ray, Doh. Then the opening of the second, third and last lines may be viewed as reductions or variations of the original subject, which gives the tune special effect; affording scope and freedom to the harmony, and relieving the stiff, classic symmetry which severe canon, or in other words, strict and rigid imitation, are apt to involve. And lastly the calm, steady entry of the note Me, three times reproduced in the second line, lending force, beauty and variety to the entire