

children had blessed the union, and the composer's domestic happiness became a bar to his temporal preferment. With two others he was dismissed from the chapel because he was a layman, and a trifling pension allowed him. Two months afterwards, though, he was appointed chapel master of St. John, Lateran, his works now succeeded each other rapidly, and different collections of his masses were dedicated to the crowned heads of Europe. In 1571 he was appointed chapel master of the Vatican, and Pope Gregory XIII. gave special charge of the reform of sacred music to Palestrina. The death of the composer's wife, whom he idolized, in 1580, was a blow from which he never recovered. In his latter days he suffered great poverty, for the positions he held were always more honorable than lucrative. Mental depression and physical weakness burdened the last few years of his pious and gentle life, and he died after a lingering and severe illness. The register of the Pontifical chapel contains this entry: "February 2, 1594. This morning died the most excellent musician, Signor Giovanna Palestrina, our dear companion and *maestro di capella* of St. Peter's church, whither his funeral was attended not only by all the musicians of Rome, but by an infinite concourse of people, when his own "Libera me, Domine" was sung by the whole college."

Such are the simple and meagre records of the life of the composer who carved and laid the foundation of the superstructure of Italian music; who viewed in connection with his times and their limitations, must be regarded as one of the great creative minds in his art; who shares with Sebastian Bach the glory of having built an imperishable base for the labors of his successors. Palestrina left a great mass of compositions, glowing with the fire of genius, part of which have been published. His simple life was devoted to musical labor, and passed without romance, diversion or excitement. His works are marked by utter absence of contrast and color. Without dramatic movement, they are full of melody and majesty, a majesty serene, unruffled by the slightest suggestion of human passion. Voices are now and then used for individual expression, but either in unison or harmony. As in all great church music, the chorus is the key of the work. The general judgment of musicians agrees that repose and enjoyment are more characteristic of this music than that of any other master. The choir of the Sistine chapel, by the inheritance of long-cherished tradition, is the most perfect exponent of the Palestrina music. During the annual performance of the "Improperie" and "Lamentations," the altar and walls are despoiled of their pictures and ornaments, and everything is draped in black. The cardinals dressed in serge, no incense, no candles: the whole scene is a striking picture of trouble and desolation. The faithful come in two by two and bow before the cross, while the sad music reverberates through the chapel arches. This powerful appeal to the imagination, of course, lends greater power

to the musical effect. But all minds who have felt the light and beauty of these compositions have acknowledged how far they soar above words and creeds, and the picturesque frame work of a liturgy.

Mendelssohn, in a letter to Zelter, on the Palestrina music as heard in the Sistine chapel, says that nothing could exceed the effect of the blending of the voices, the prolonged tones gradually merging from one note and chord to another, softly swelling, decreasing, at last dying out. "They understand," he writes, "how to bring out and place each trait in the most delicate light, without giving it undue prominence, one chord gently melts into another. The ceremony at the same time is solemn and imposing; deep silence prevails in the chapel, only broken by the re-echoing Greek "holy," sung with unvarying sweetness and expression. The composer Paer was so impressed with the wonderful beauty of the music and the performance, that he exclaimed: "This is, indeed divine music, such as I have long sought for, and my imagination was never able to realize, but which I knew must exist." Palestrina's versatility and genius enabled him to lift ecclesiastical music out of the rigidity and frivolity characterizing on either hand the opposing ranks of those that preceded him, and to embody the religious spirit in works of the highest art. He transposed the ecclesiastical melody (*canto fermo*) from the tenor to the soprano (thus rendering it more intelligible to the ear), and created that glorious thing choir song, with its refined harmony, that noble music of which his works are the models, and the Papal chair the oracle. No individual pre-eminence is ever allowed to disturb and weaken the ideal atmosphere of the whole work. However Palestrina's successors have aimed to imitate his effects they have, with the exception of Cherubini failed for the most part. For every peculiar genus of art is the result of innate, genuine inspiration, and the spontaneous growth of the age which produces it. As a parent of musical form he was the protagonist of Italian music, both sacred and secular, and left an admirable model, which even the new school of opera, so soon to rise, found it necessary to follow in the construction of harmony. The splendid and often licentious music of the theatre built its most worthy effects on the work of the pious composer, who lived, labored and died in an atmosphere of almost anchorite sanctity. The great disciples of his school, Nannini and Allegri, continued his work, and the splendid "Miserere" of the latter was regarded as such an inestimable treasure that no copy of it was allowed to go out of the Sistine chapel, till the infant prodigy, Wolfgang Mozart, wrote it out from the memory of a single hearing.

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THE Boston Cecilia Club, at its concert in January, will give Dudley Buck's cantata, "The Golden Legend." This is the work which received the prize at the competitive examination of the Cincinnati College of Music, and there will be a great deal of curiosity to hear it in Boston; where Mr. Buck has a great many friends.