

MUSICAL SERVICES IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

THE sixth biennial report to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's, which has lately been issued, is particularly interesting, as it is the first issued by the Rev. Minor-Canon Russell since his succession to the office of Succentor in the room of Dr. Sparrow Simpson, who resigned. As the report is not very largely circulated, we deem it well in the interest of our readers to make some lengthy extracts.

The report first deals with some personal matters, and notably with the appointment of Canon Scott Holland to the Precentorship in succession to the late Rev. A. C. Belli. Mr. Russell says that the appointment of a Canon-residentary as precentor is a new departure, but there is every reason for congratulation; for the new precentor has a thorough appreciation of good Church music, and has already given proof of the interest he is likely to take in all persons and matters connected with the choir. And whether or no he will be prepared ultimately to take upon himself the actual duties of his office, he may be relied upon for desiring or favouring no change, which will not evidently tend to promote the highest possible perfection in the musical services of the cathedral.

The list of new music contained in the Report is small in comparison with that of former years; but the cathedral list, in most of its parts, has become so large, that it has been found necessary to exercise considerable reserve in adding to it. The number of anthems (we are quoting from the Report) in use at St. Paul's is something like 500; and, allowing for one anthem at each evening service during the seven days of the week, and in the morning for five days (there is no anthem on Wednesday or Friday morning), it will be seen that this only admits, on an average, of the performance of each anthem rather more than once in the course of the year. And although too constant repetition may tend to produce a less careful rendering, yet there are many difficult compositions to which justice can hardly be done, even by a good choir, unless they are kept in more constant practice than such an average would allow. Much to the same effect may be said also with respect to services, more especially settings of music for the celebration of Holy Communion. The list contains at present about thirty such settings, and as there are only about eighty Sundays and Holy days in the year on which they can be used, it will be seen that this number admits of the performance of each rather less than three times in the course of the year, which is the very least possible, if the music is to be kept in good practice. With regard to the settings of the Canticles; in the case of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, the number on the list allows of about nine weeks without repetition. But the morning Canticles—at least in the case of the *Te Deum* and *Benedictus*—would very readily admit of an increase in their number of settings, as the list contains at present only sufficient to last for about five weeks without repetition. The greater number of services with *Benedictus* have, however, only been called into existence during the last twelve years, and, in a great measure, it is believed, owing to the demands of St. Paul's Cathedral, where the *Jubilata* is sung only on Wednesdays and Fridays; and most of the older

services consist of *Te Deum* and *Jubilata* only. Here, however, is a field in which Church composers might find useful opportunity and employment; for it is to be hoped that before long, Churchmen generally will not endure to be deprived of the *Benedictus*, relating so expressly as it does to the Incarnation, and being, moreover, the only Cantic in the morning service, taken in its entirety from the New Testament.

On the selection and rejection of new music, Mr. Russell says:—A great deal of new music is sent on trial, and that which is immediately or ultimately rejected may be divided into three classes: (1) music which is in itself considered insufficiently meritorious; (2) that which is considered inappropriate to the words, or (in the case of anthems) the words of which are deemed unsuitable for use in church—at any rate in a cathedral church; (3) music which, although good in itself is not considered suitable for the particular conditions imposed by St. Paul's Cathedral, the acoustic properties of which are very peculiar. The fitness or unfitness of music in this latter respect can, for the most part, only be ascertained after some considerable trial, and thus it frequently happens that music which has been in use for some time is allowed ultimately to drop off the list. It is to be hoped, therefore, that musical composers who are good enough to send music on approbation (much more being often sent than can possibly be acknowledged) will understand that such music is not of necessity rejected or allowed to fall into disuse, because its merits are unrecognized, but more frequently only because it is not thought suited to the particular requirements of St. Paul's, or, at least, to those conditions under which its services are now generally held. It is indeed on this same account that some of the verse anthems, by the old masters, which used to be sung with excellent effect when the services were held, and the whole congregation contained, in the choir, are wholly ineffective now that the services are held under the dome, and with congregations frequently stretching back into the nave.

Mr. Russell here adds a list of new Services and Anthems that have been introduced during the past two years. He then speaks of the want of Men's Voice Services, in the absence of the boys on holidays; and in connection with this matter, Mr. Russell says a new departure has been made during the past two years in the introduction of Gregorian (unison) chants to the Psalms. As there was at first a certain amount of antipathy to this order, perhaps it may be well to state the two principal reasons for which the introduction of Plain-song chanting (at any rate as an experiment) was suggested: (1) Because the arrangement of harmonized double chants (excellent as some of those in use were), which gave the melody to the alto—and naturally, therefore, the weakest—voice, was not and could not be satisfactory. (2) Because St. Paul's having of late made it an object to give to the diocese, so far as possible, an example of all the various kinds of music and of musical service ordinarily recognized—*i.e.*, from the highest and most elaborate type down to that which is simplest and most congregational—it did not seem fitting that Gregorian music, with its ancient pedigree, and employed, as it is, in so large a number of churches, should be left altogether unrepresented. And these men's voice services, which