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DECEMBER 2, 1919.

CLIFFORD B. EDGAR, Esq., M.P.,
VICE-PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

*THE MUSICAL CRIES OF LONDON IN
SHAKESPEARE'S TIME.*

BY SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE, C.V.O.

DR. Wheatley, in an article on London in the time of Shakespeare, says, "The Cries in the streets were much the same as those recorded in the 15th Century." (From "London Luckpenny"). He goes on to mention particularly the Cry of "What d'ye lacke?" and Rock Sampire, Old Boots, Buy a Mat, Small Coal, Green Brooms. Also he mentions the Cries outside the prison doors for the "poor women in the dark dungeons," and "Bread and Meat for the tender mercy of God to the poor prisoners of the Marshalsea." He would have been much interested in the complete collection of these old Cries, which are preserved to us in the works of three great musicians who were contemporaries of Shakespeare.

So far as I can learn these three compositions have not hitherto been printed. They are preserved in manuscript in the British Museum, and my attention was called to them some time ago, when that great and useful antiquary, Dr. Southgate, was helping me with regard to a work by Dering called "Country Cries." Dr. Southgate was actually working at Weelkes' composition when death overtook him, to the great loss, not only of myself, but of this and all kindred societies.

I am anxious you should hear all the music I have to put before you, and therefore must cut my remarks as short as possible.

We get very little information of these Cries from the musical historians. Burney tells us nothing. Hawkins gives us a few interesting particulars, though he is not very correct in certain matters. He says, "It was formerly a practice with the musicians to set the Cries of London to music, retaining the

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very musical notes of them." He goes on to say, "Orlando Gibbons set music in four parts to the Cries in his time." This sentence needs explanation. When Hawkins states that the composers set the Cries to music, one naturally concludes that they took the words of the old Cries and set them to music. But he continues "retaining the very musical notes of them." Now this is exactly what is so interesting. The examples which I hope to put before you will show that the composers did not set the Cries, but incorporated the old Cries prevalent in London in Shakespeare's time, words and music, into a new form of composition for voices and instruments. This new form is very striking since it is an enlargement of the scope of the Fancy.

This was the great instrumental form of the time, composed as a rule for strings, and consisting, for the most part, of elaborate work of a contrapuntal nature, full of points of imitation. Nearly all the composers of the period of which I am speaking wrote Fancies. Even up to the days of Purcell they were in vogue, Purcell himself writing some remarkable ones, before he ventured on the new form of Sonatas. But these Fancies had no vocal parts, and what I am now concerned with is a delightful development of the Fancy—not only containing the usual parts for strings, but adding vocal parts, these vocal parts consisting exclusively of the Old London Cries, with their words and the original music; not new settings by the composer of the Fancy. That these old Cries are given to the original music is proved by the fact that the three composers whose Fancies I have been able to get together, Weelkes, Gibbons and Dering, used the same words and music for the various Cries they used.

The first specimen I give to-day is the least elaborate and shortest. The Cries in Weelkes are allotted to one part only, the Cantus or Melody. But for variety's sake and to save the singers' fatigue, I have allotted the various Cries to various singers and different voices. I have, however, made no change in the music. One point I ought to explain. In the middle of the movement the Fancy make a pause—the time changes—and a charming little dance tune to some odd words—"Twinkcedowne Tavye" is introduced. This is exactly what we find in the Ballets and is the only approach to the Madrigal style in the composition, with, perhaps, the exception of the conclusion with its Alleluia which sounds rather like an Anthem! The seller of brooms has a charming song—not a Cry, but a song—such as the itinerent vendors of ink, blacking, garlic, etc., sang and which are found in the more elaborate things by Gibbons and Dering. In an old play "A right excellent and famous Comedy," entitled "Three

Ladies of London," printed in 1584, one of the characters called "Conscience," enters with brooms and sings this very song:—

"Have you any old boots or any old shoon,
Pouch rings or buskins—will ye buy any broome."
This was no doubt sung to this fine old tune.

In the case of the dance and the song I have arranged the words for five voices to the music written for the viols. But of course the Melody only can be sung—the other parts being in the accompaniment which is arranged from the score for viols.

In the three Fancies which I have scored there are nearly 150 different Cries, and itinerent vendors' songs. All three composers have used some of the Cries and two out of the three a great number. It is extraordinary what a collection it makes. There are thirteen different kinds of fish, but the Cries are very similar in some cases.

- 18 Different kinds of Fruit.
- 6 Kinds of Liquors and Herbs.
- 11 Vegetables.
- 14 Kinds of Food.
- 14 Kinds of Household Stuff.
- 13 Articles of Clothing.
- 9 Tradesmen's Cries.
- 19 Tradesmen's Songs.
- 4 Begging Songs for Prisoners and Bedlam.
- 1 Town Crier. (Used by all three composers).
- 5 Watchman's Songs.

The work of Gibbons is longer and more elaborate than Weelkes' and it is particularly interesting to find it in the form of an *In Nomine*! Perhaps I need not explain to this audience what an *In Nomine* is. But I might just say it is a form of Fancy which contained in one part a Plain-song Melody. It is wonderful how these old composers worked their florid parts round the steady going part of monotonous Plain-song. I have had several performed at my Gresham Lectures, but they have all been for instruments only. Now here is one in which the inner viol parts play the Plain-song (a bit of Ecclesiastical music), while the vocal parts are exclusively composed of the old Cries. Perhaps I had better quote old Roger North, who seems, I think, to give a more lucid account of the *In Nomine* than other writers. He says, "Before the introduction of Fancies whole Consorts for instruments of 4, 5, and 6 parts were solemnly composed, and with wonderful art and variation while one of the parts (commonly in the middle), bore only the Plain-song throughout, and I guess that in some time little of other Consort music was coveted or in use."

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This, then, is the form of Gibbons. The opening is very picturesque. We feel we are in the quiet street in the very early morning. The viols have a solemn little passage of Imitation and the monotone of the Watchman is heard, going his round.

"God give you good morrow, my masters, past three o'clock and a faire morning." Then suddenly, with a change in the accompaniment from minor to major, the Cries of the vendors of fish begin. Curiously enough, Gibbons begins with mussels and not oysters—oysters come later. I will not comment on the Cries. You will hear them. Only I want to call your attention to one or two points.

1. There is a delightful little song—not a cry—for the seller of Ink, then a very comical Town Crier, who cries a mare lost "on the 30th day of February." Then a very interesting Begging Song for the inmates of Bedlam. "Poor, naked Bedlam Tom's a cold. A small cut of thy bacon, or a piece of thy sow's side, good Besse. God Almighty bless thy witts!"

Shakespeare has used many of these very words in "King Lear." "Bless thy poor wits—Tom's a cold."—Edgar disguised as a madman in King Lear. Sc. IV. Act 3. This Fancy is divided into two parts. Part one finishes with a delightful bit of Harmony. The most striking song in part two is for the Chimney Sweep, and this song occurs note for note and word for word in Dering's work, showing it to be a really popular tune. The work concludes with the Watchman's warning, "Twelve o'clock, look well to your locks, your fire and your light, and so good night." This beautiful specimen and Dering's, are in a manuscript, copied in 1616, by Thos. Myrrell, so that we may be sure they were composed in Shakespeare's lifetime. The translation of the title page is as follows: "A remedy against sadness—select songs of various authors, and on various subjects, set down by the labours and hand of Thomas Myrrell, A.D. 1616."

The Dering I present is called "What d'ye lacke?" after the opening, which is clearly intended to represent the 'Prentices at the shop doors advertising their wares. But the great charm of Dering's work is the number of real songs, *i.e.*, more than Cries, which he preserves for us.

We have here the sellers of Ink, Old Doublets (the same as Gibbons, but here in a different time), Rosemary and Bays, Chimney Sweep (the same as Gibbons), Blacking, a Cooper (very interesting, as the tune is the first part of "Heartsease," alluded to by Shakespeare). Rats and Mice, Garlic, and we also find the Begging song, "Bread and Meat for the Prisoners of the Marshalsea," and other similar petitions. The whole work is an advance on Gibbons and Weelkes, and shows

Dering to be a really admirable composer. I must confess I feel a great satisfaction in unearthing this specimen, because I have already, as some of you know, restored to life and use some of this composer's splendid Motets. It is to me astounding how this great man should have been so long neglected by musicians and by historians.

His motets are really almost as advanced as much of Purcell's music. But I have not time now to dwell upon that. I am sure you will be glad to hear this Fancy. Like the others it begins with a short contrapuntal symphony, and is scored for five viols and four voices.

There are a few very humorous Cries in this Fancy—the Corn Cutter, and the Dentist, who calls himself by the encouraging name of "Kindheart, the tooth-drawer."

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those of you who are familiar with the work of Sir Frederick Bridge, know that he has the gift of discovering forgotten musical treasures connected with this country. Musical London, for instance, owes much to him for what during the last thirty years and more he has brought to light at his Gresham Lectures and here and elsewhere. And his Paper to-night is no exception to this long general rule.

In the days when I was much less busy than now I used to devote much attention to antiquarian music; but I never happened to strike the particular vein upon which Sir Frederick has drawn so effectively to-night. I could not help thinking, when we heard the illustration by Weelkes, that if it were rendered by a chorus to the cast on the stage, much as we have heard to-day, with an Elizabethan background and a violin orchestra in front, quite a sensation would be made. It only shows what strong dramatic instinct there was several generations before Purcell. The whole performance is astonishing in the dramatic instinct displayed and the fullness and complexity it manifests.

PROFESSOR J. C. BRIDGE: I am very much interested in the music we have heard for this reason—that some two or three years ago I met with a piece of music in the British Museum evidently written by some native of Durham. I was greatly struck with the piece. Unfortunately it was a single voice part, the tenor part; so it was extremely difficult to make out the whole of it. However, I marked two things; first the great length which showed that it was not a madrigal;

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secondly, that it contained several descriptions of the towns and villages about Durham, mentioning them by name, and, thirdly, that it contained several street cries, especially of "coal," which one would naturally expect coming as it did from the neighbourhood of the coal-fields of Durham. The whole thing appealed to me very much. Further it helps to elucidate what we have heard this evening; for it seems to show that there was at that time a custom of making up what we might almost call small "cantatas" with allusions to street cries and the names of places. In the Durham piece reference is made to the tinkling of the bells of the Churches. So that it looks as if the local musician did much the same as the London musician. He worked on the same lines.

With regard to another point—the use of that old Corpus Christi melody. I think we may get a cue to that in the Corpus Christi Festival. This was a great festival in Chester and Coventry and other places when the people went in procession round the streets with the clergy, accompanied by the trade companies. I may say that in Chester we have still some City Companies as you have in London. The Corpus Christi procession having ended they wound up with dinner at the nearest tavern, or (in the case of those Companies that were wealthy), at their own special halls. Now there can be little doubt that many of these compositions were made up to be played at these entertainments. They must have been written for some such purpose. Of course by the time that Gibbons wrote, these processions may have died out. But the commemoration of the day would not have died out; and therefore such compositions would still be used in a town where they formerly had the Corpus Christi Festival. It is merely a suggestion, but I cannot help thinking that this affords an explanation of the reasons which induced these old writers to embody that melody. Then there is another thing which strikes one very much. We are sometimes apt to suppose that in the old days London was quiet. But it could not have been particularly quiet with the watchman beginning at three in the morning followed by the apprentices appearing at six o'clock and bawling their master's wares, followed by every variety of street cry. At the same time there is this to be said that if disturbed in one's sleep or later by these Cries, they at any rate were a deal more pleasant than the roar of the omnibus, and the screech of the motor horn.

Of course the music speaks for itself. I think it is wonderful. I will only add one remark; I know what an immense amount of trouble my brother has been to in putting this music together. I know what it is to copy such music,

and to arrange for the rehearsal of something so complicated which contains no cue of any value. To my brother this has meant much labour and loss of time; but it has been a labour of love for which I know you will be grateful.

Sir FREDERICK BRIDGE addressing Dr. Terry said: Is there anything to be said about the use of the *In Nomine*?

Dr. TERRY: From my experience of *In Nomines* I have come to the conclusion that they are more likely to have been for instruments than for voices: the range of the parts seems to indicate this in the majority of cases, and the effect to my mind is more instrumental. My experience is confined to the collection in the Bodleian, about ninety of them, for four, five and six voices. The extraordinary thing to me was to come across names that I had never before heard of coupled with music which was as good as anything of the period. In meeting names like Mr. Buck, Mr. Mudd, Mr. Wilson and so on, with which I was not acquainted, I was amazed at the contrapuntal ingenuity shown and at the general effect.

As to the theory put forward by Dr. Bridge in regard to the Corpus Christi festivities, I have no doubt that this Festival may have had something to do with it, but we have to remember that the Feast of Corpus Christi was not instituted till long after Trinity Sunday, and the melody of this is the antiphon for Trinity Sunday generally known as the Gloria in Trinitas, and those of you who heard my remarks about Merbecke will remember that that theme was then given. English composers had a fondness for it.

I did not know that Weelkes had dealt with the subject of these Cries, though I knew that the others had done so; and I was much surprised to find how much below the level of these others he fell in his musical setting. Another thing you will have noticed I am sure is the change from the purely contrapuntal style, and the more dramatic effect in Dering. That is, of course, what he was successful in, as he belonged to a later period when people were beginning to hunt for more dramatic modes of expression.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is now my pleasant duty to ask you to pass a hearty Vote of Thanks to Sir Frederick Bridge for his extremely interesting lecture, and to the ladies and gentlemen who have so effectively illustrated it.

The votes of thanks were carried by acclamation.

Sir FREDERICK BRIDGE: I must disclaim at once the kind compliment that has been paid me because I have not made any great discovery myself in connection with this matter. The fortunate trend of this investigation I owe in great measure to another man; at the same time I have pursued

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the investigation with a great deal of interest. I must confess that I am extremely thankful this evening has come because I feared that something would occur to prevent me bringing the thing really to a head, for it has been a very great labour. You see the Cries I am talking about were prevalent three hundred years ago and the music that you have heard was written at that time. And it has never been printed ; it is all in manuscript. Anybody who has had to do with old manuscripts knows the trouble involved. Then, further you have to get them copied, and the copyist has to make a few mistakes.

I want to express my extreme gratitude to those ladies and gentlemen who have come to help, and in particular to my friend Mr. Stanley Roper who is a tower of strength on these occasions, and to the ladies who have taken so much trouble. Yes! and to the Strings. They have had to play whole bars, when they could scarcely believe their own eyes. It is very difficult indeed to throw yourself back to a period three hundred years ago. But those who have played to-day have been extremely careful and have taken a great deal of trouble. Mr. Cobbett also has been a tower of strength, and I am sure he has taken a great deal of trouble to practise ! Then, too, I must thank my brother who was at the piano.