Organ Accompaniment and the 'Cathedral Tradition'

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- (2.) To accustom him to play before an audience—rid himself of self-consciousness.
- (3.) To demonstrate to his friends and the public the method of training he is being subjected to, and the results obtained therefrom.
- (4.) To advertise the teacher.

Now, leaving (2) and (4) out of the argument as irrelevant, and bearing in mind the words 'incentive,' 'method,' 'results,' let us ask again: Have we, with all our native music-literature, such works as will serve for a solid foundation and provide a complete musical education for the present 'war-time' generation of young people studying pianoforte?

Whilst wishing to give full credit to the efforts that are being made by English composers to develop on national lines and create an English School, which efforts there is much hope will be crowned later with success (in the same way as the Russians have found themselves, musically speaking: the outcome of sixty years' earnest and intense striving), whilst desirous of being both reasonable and seasonable, it is useless to deny that the time has not yet arrived when we can make good this important claim. We have many charming salon pieces, but there is no special work of any special composer of which it can be said, 'This is epoch-making—this is a masterpiece of world-value that our own and future generations will study with enthusiasm and teachers be thankful to teach.'

Even assuming that some such transcendent and planetary works did actually exist on a parity with the classics (which Mr. Legge prefers to dub 'foreign'), would it be possible for the student to develop musically on one nation's output? *Is the present generation to be debarred from the privileges in musical existence that former generations have profited by, including Mr. Legge himself?* Would he have it that the grandchildren of whom he speaks should be denied the study of a Bach Fugue or a Beethoven Sonata, to have withheld from them the joy of hearing a Mozart opera, or the maturer happiness of playing a Chopin Ballade? (I take it that the latter composer is now taboo, seeing that his birthplace has become 'enemysied'.)

Assuming that we were at war with Spain or Holland, should we deny our art students the benefit of inspiration that should ensue from the study of Vandyck, Hobbema, or Rembrandt? Should we say 'Young man, and likewise young woman, you will, in visiting exhibitions and galleries, be expected to dodge enemy tainted canvases, avoiding a direct gaze at any picture save those painted by native artists. Cooper, Tadema, Stone, Lavery, Orpen, and the like only are suitable for your vision at the present time, when it is seemly that your artistic development should be based purely on patriotic and local lines.'

We might go further and request schools and colleges established for general education to eliminate the study of Greek, having in mind the slipperiness of 'Tino.'

No! War is after all a transient condition, thank God. Art remains for all time. Nations fighting in hatred now will in years hence have their feuds healed. Allies will probably be future foes, unless the Millennium is at hand. Meanwhile Egyptian friezes and Sappho's poems will remain just as precious, just as important as they have been and are now, long after the direful results of the war are, so to speak, obliterated by unborn humanity. As in a former period the emanation came from Germany, so to-day in France lies the crystallization of the modern spirit of music-genius, and neither that exceptional past nor the particular present can we afford to eliminate from our scheme of musical well-being,—in my opinion and, apparently, that of my colleagues.

Nevertheless, when museums are divested of exhibits, when libraries delete shelves of books and galleries bury or destroy pictures, fashioned, written, and painted by natives of countries with whom we are at present at war, then, although the education of our pupils will be a lopsided affair—the poor things will be but poorly nourished, it is to be feared, on the war-diet; we need variety in music as well as in food in order to thrive—we music-teachers must fall in line and choose only native compositions to be played by our young people.

Meanwhile critics must set-to and draw up a list of such works for hundreds of pianists of all ages and stages, one

that should be satisfactory inasmuch as it will have to fulfil the requirements for an all-round musical education hitherto contributed by many sources. Furthermore, the desirability must be borne in mind of not more than fifty per cent. studying the same compositions, seeing that *the horizon must not be narrowed*.—Yours, &c.,

GERTRUDE AZULAY.

2, Goldhurst Terrace, N.W.-6.

ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT AND THE 'CATHEDRAL TRADITION.'

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—The article by Mr. Bernard Johnson on the above subject was to me, as doubtless it was to many more of your readers who are organists in nonconformist churches, a welcome feature. Mr. Harvey Grace's articles, which have appeared in the *Musical Times*, while of great value and interest to all organists, have dealt almost entirely with the problems which confront those who officiate in Anglican churches. Those of us for whom the chief, if not the only, musical interest of a service lies in four or five hymns have our own difficulties to face, and it was good to find some of them dealt with in your columns.

Not however that we are entitled to consider good hymn-singing a peculiarly nonconformist attribute, but in so many cases it provides the only medium for the active participation of the congregation in the worship. The more to our shame be it then that the finest work, both in research and practice, in this branch as in others of Church music, is done by that more advanced section of the Anglican Church which, under the name 'High Church,' we are, or were, supposed to abhor. The fact remains that here, where there exist many other beautiful musical (and congregational) aids to worship, the greatest trouble is taken to make hymn-singing alive and interesting, instead of the perfunctory acts they so often are. I allude to the use of antiphonal singing (by men and women alternately); occasional verses with melody in tenor, the congregation keeping the melody; unison verses, sometimes varied by the addition of a descant for choir sopranos, and the like.

Mr. Bernard Johnson very rightly says that such devices are not for every verse, nor yet for every hymn; but judiciously used they will go far to correct that tendency to monotony which, do what one will, seems to creep into some of our services, particularly when all five hymns in the minister's list are common metre! That this treatment is not uncongregational I can testify. One needs simply once or twice to emphasise that there is a true 'people's part,' and a short congregational practice occasionally, before or after evening service, will be willingly attended if such points are dealt with. So far from being 'bowled over' or 'bearing with it' (to quote Mr. Johnson again) the people rise to a sense of responsibility when they realise that not merely are they 'requested to join in,' but that they have their own part which is essential to the desired effect.

To Mr. Johnson's 'great point' of *pace* let me add that of *pitch*. The 'Cathedral tradition' has caused our hymn-book editors to think in terms of the choir-boy, and therefore the tunes are too high for congregations. The 'English Hymnal' is an honourable exception.

Let me close by expressing my delight at discovering in the new 'Scottish Mission Hymnal' some fine Plainsong and old French and English tunes, and the John Dowland version of the 'Old Hundredth,' with melody in tenor. The equal-note version of most Psalm-tunes has, however, been retained. This is a survival that I hope will soon disappear.

J. S. YATES.

(Organist and Choirmaster, St. Andrew's, Pretoria, S.A.)

London, July 7, 1917.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—May I suggest that Mr. Bernard Johnson, in his article on 'Organ Accompaniment' in your July issue, throws his weight on to the weaker method in giving *melodic* elaboration such prominence in his examples. Melodic variation, especially of the chromatic type he advocates in the last example, adds, in my opinion,

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nothing to the distinction of a tune, and is indeed apt to destroy all sense of dignity; the more especially when such a massive structure as 'Aurelia' is chosen for experiment,—a tune already murdered by being sung at almost double the pace intended by its composer.

In my experience, both in the loft and in the congregation, block chords and suspensions are by many degrees the most

telling; and the change which the accompanist must supply is a change of atmosphere, which is in no way brought about by melodic methods.

Take for example 'Adeste Fideles,' which oscillates throughout between A major and E major; what a different point of view of the melody (with which, alone, the congregation is concerned) is afforded at half-way by such a score as:

In the chorale type, relief may well be obtained by retaining the sustained chords over a pedal moving conjunctly, in some such way as:

Melodic variation at the hands of the great masters is frequently tedious and irritating to the listener. In the hands of the average organist, it would prove far from an incentive to the congregation, and would merely furnish another link between the 'king of instruments' and

its mechanical relative. This, of course, is merely an opinion.

Yours, &c.,

C. CORBETT SUMSION.

96, Marlborough Road, Oxford,
July 6, 1917.

Mr. W. K. Stanton considers that Mr. Bernard Johnson's views demand a vigorous protest. He says:

SIR,—The best hymn tunes, properly treated, are good music, and are wanted, without doubt, in all public worship. Good tunes, however, are all too frequently spoilt by the tricks and liberties of the organist. Example 2 is not a good tune in any case, but the meaningless additions to the harmony deprive it of all strength and dignity. If the tune is bad, do not use it. If it is good, then let it speak for itself. Further, in what way does the introduction of weak and palsied chromatic harmonies tend to 'compel' the people to sing? Experience would more frequently show that the broader the melody and the stronger the harmonies, the better will the congregation sing. By all means let us have Unison verses, but let them be dignified; and, if variation is needed, I would suggest a good Faux Bourdon (an idea which at present, I believe, does not enjoy the wide use it deserves) sung by the trebles.

Such observations, however, fall quickly into the background when one considers that there is a healthy movement in the Church at the present time to teach people better things, and to make public worship a thing of dignity and reverence. Suggestions of the kind which Mr. Johnson offers are nothing short of a retrograde movement. It is this very weakness in hymn

tunes which such books as the 'English Hymnal,' 'Songs of Syn,' 'In Hoc Signo,' and the new edition of the 'Public Schools Hymn Book' (now in preparation) have tried, and are trying, to suppress.

The atmosphere of hymn tunes which were popular in the latter part of the 19th century was one of limp sentimentality—and it is this which Mr. Johnson would perpetuate. Let him hear a congregation, which has had experience of the serious type of music, sing Croft's 136th ('English Hymnal,' 565), which would admit of the treatment he suggests (though one shrinks from such a thought),—and then I would ask him if he candidly prefers his treatment to the big, strong chords of this tune?

St. Edward's School,
Oxford.

Eton College Musical Library has received the complete works of Bach (forty-six bound volumes in the Bach-Gesellschaft edition) and a beautifully illustrated treatise on historical and rare instruments by Hopkins. The books were the property of the late Mr. George S. K. Butterworth, O.E., and were presented in his memory by his father, Sir Alexander Kaye Butterworth.