Review: Cathedrals and Churches in North Germany. A Very Interesting Book

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ST. MARY'S, LÜBECK: THE NAVE, LOOKING WEST.

*(Reproduced by permission of Mr. T. Francis Bumpus.)*CATHEDRALS AND CHURCHES IN
NORTH GERMANY.*

A VERY INTERESTING BOOK.

The name of Mr. John S. Bumpus is familiar to readers of *THE MUSICAL TIMES* as one who is an enthusiastic antiquary and a reliable authority on church music. Now we have the pleasure of introducing his brother Mr. T. Francis Bumpus, through the medium of an exceedingly interesting and well-written book on the Cathedrals and Churches in North Germany. One has only to read a few of the four hundred pages of this attractive volume to discover that Mr. Francis Bumpus is an ardent ecclesiologist. But this is not all. He has a fluent pen, one wherewith he graphically describes the more or less out-of-the-way places he has visited in his

holiday rambles. The information here gathered together is moreover most valuable to students of church architecture; not that our author's range of vision is limited, for, as we shall see, he takes due note of the music he has heard during his ecclesiological peregrinations.

The first extract which we venture to make from the book furnishes a specimen of Mr. Bumpus's descriptive style. He has arrived at Soest, formerly one of the most important of the Hanse towns and a free imperial city, where Sir Peter Lely was born in 1618. After referring to its 'low-browed plastered and timbered and text-adorned houses' and its roughly-paved streets, Mr. Bumpus goes on to say:—

Such are my first impressions of Soest as the omnibus belonging to the Hotel Overweg rolls or rather jolts and bumps with me over the stones, presently depositing its solitary 'inside' at the excellent and comfortable hostel above named, whose whole establishment seems congregated on the steps in anticipation of an arrival. The conventional

* Holiday rambles among the Cathedrals and Churches of North Germany. By T. Francis Bumpus. With 83 illustrations. London: Thos. B. Bumpus and John S. Bumpus, St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill. 1903.

courtesies have been exchanged, and I am ushered through a broad hall, up a spacious staircase and along a corridor hung with capital engravings—some of them English—to an airy bedroom, commanding a view not only of a very charming garden, gay with August flowers, of which I had a glimpse on entering,

though at Cologne and Münster Cathedrals it is placed in the north transept. Other exceptions to the rule are the Marien Kirche at Dortmund, and the Cathedrals of Metz, Strassburg, and Freiburg-im-Breisgau, where it is arranged with imposing effect above one of the nave arches.

Our author's continuing remarks will be endorsed by not a few who lament the destruction of fine old organ-cases in English churches:—

The list of organ-cases belonging to the era of Classicism — by which I mean the latter part of the seventeenth and the whole of the eighteenth centuries—might, like that of other items of church furniture, be prolonged to an indefinite length. It is therefore only necessary I think to point to the organ-cases in the cathedrals of Frauenburg, Mayence, Halberstadt, Havelberg and Minden, and to those in the churches of St. Martin at Brunswick, St. Mary at Danzig, and St. John at Magdeburg as typical specimens of their age. Indeed an organ-case purely Renaissance in design, of the greatest sumptuousness, and of the most imposing dimensions, may be met with in the majority of the northern churches, particularly those in the wealthy Hanseatic cities neighbouring to the Baltic. A generation or so ago their number was doubtless even larger than it is now, for it is to be feared that not a few of these magnificent shrines for the king of instruments have been ousted, during the mania for Gothicising everything possible, to give place to work 'more in keeping' with the fabric. It is, however, to be hoped that in Germany, as among ourselves, a better taste has arisen in this direction. An old church and its furniture are a sort of epitome in stone or other material of the history of a country and of the successive variations in religion and taste which have occurred from age to age.

Through the kindness of our author we are enabled to give from his book two illustrations of organ-cases—that of St. Martin's, Brunswick, and St. Mary's, Lübeck. The latter church has a peculiar interest to musicians, in that Buxtehude was organist there—then one of the best and most lucrative posts in Germany—from 1668 to 1707. In 1705 Bach visited Lübeck, where he remained three months, in order to make the acquaintance of Buxtehude, and to hear the famous evening performances (*Abendmusiken*) given in this fine church during Advent. Moreover, Handel and Matheson both competed for the post of organist at Lübeck in succession to Buxtehude; but as one of the conditions of accepting the appointment was that the successful candidate must marry Miss Buxtehude, the daughter of the retiring organist, they both declined to enter upon the joint duties of organist and husband. The view of this noble organ-case will therefore be specially welcome. Very interesting are the accounts given of the power of simple worship music and the effect of the church-song of the people in these well-attended cathedrals and churches of the Fatherland. At Münster Mr. Bumpus attended a People's service in the cathedral, and so thronged was the sacred edifice that he had great difficulty even in squeezing in. He says:—

Here I remained, in a crowd from which exit seemed impossible, for the rest of the Mass, which was being celebrated by a solitary priest arrayed in a green chasuble, attended only by a server at the People's or Holy Cross altar at the entrance to the

ORGAN-CASE IN ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, BRUNSWICK.

(Reproduced by permission of Mr. T. Francis Bumpus.)

but of the steeple of one of the churches. Cocks are crowing, answered by others in the distance, hens are clucking in the conscious pride of newly laid eggs, sweet smells are wafted in from the country, and everything looks so *riant* and pretty, that—the bustle consequent upon my arrival having subsided and the premises restored to order and quiet—I request that coffee may be served in the garden. This having appeared and in due course disappeared, a chat ensues with my host, originating in admiration of his trim garden and fine stock of poultry. Roses are growing in abundance, and of these their owner, evidently delighted at the idea of having a *Herr aus England* in the house, would have culled quite a bunch, which, however, at my earnest request, mindful that for the present I am leading a nomadic existence, is reduced to a 'button-hole.' Thus adorned and refreshed, I stroll forth to make the closer acquaintance of a place with which I am already enraptured, the Norfolk jacket and flannel unmentionables creating quite a sensation among the Soesters.

Turning to matters strictly musical, we find the position of the organ in German churches is thus referred to by Mr. Bumpus:—

Generally speaking, the organ in a German cathedral or church—whether Catholic or Protestant—occupies a gallery at the west end of the nave,

choir. There was neither elaborate music nor ritual to captivate the senses, and this rendered the earnest manner of the congregation,—largely composed of young men—its fervent adoration, and endurance of personal inconvenience, nay positive discomfort, doubly worthy of admiration. Indeed the unisonous singing of the hymns (accompanied in a grand broad style on the organ) by a congregation numbering several thousands, combined with the majesty of the pile in which it was gathered, impressed me far more deeply than the most elaborate Mass by Beethoven, Mozart, or Schubert.

The congregational singing in North German churches seems to have made a deep impression on Mr. Bumpus, as he frequently refers to it. Here are some extracts—the first at the Cathedral of Paderborn, at a Saturday evening service in honour of Liborius, the tutelary saint of the city and diocese:—

I had just settled myself when the player upon the great organ at the west end of the cathedral struck up a prelude displaying the full power of the instrument. This presently merged into a stately hymn in honour of St. Liborius, which was taken up and sung by the vast concourse without books, in a manner affecting even to tears by its simple solemn grandeur, and making one wish such spontaneous congregational singing could find a place in our own services.

On the following day (Sunday) he re-visited the Cathedral and heard a hymn-tune that is familiar to English congregations. He records:—

The first hymn was being sung when I reached the great south porch, which was so thronged as to render

I lingered for a brief space to enjoy a specimen of unisonous congregational singing, so peculiarly solemn and awe-inspiring from the circumstances under which I was introduced to it.

One more extract, which may speak for itself:—

There is one Sunday service peculiar to Germany, which no one desirous of observing the religious side of that country should fail to be present at, *i.e.*, the People's Mass. It takes place in capitular or parochial churches either before or after High Mass, and is invariably attended by crowds, who flock to enjoy the popular chorales, which, forming a great part of these judiciously arranged services, are sung in unison, and in a manner often overpoweringly affecting from its simplicity. No wonder the German Catholics resort to this service so largely, seeing that music is put before them of such a character that every man, woman and child in the church can join in it without difficulty and without feeling that his or her voice is unduly conspicuous. No one attempts to take a 'part,' everybody sings the melody.

It will be quite obvious that the temptation to further quotation from Mr. Bumpus's informing pages must be resisted. Architecture occupies the first place in his affections, but the knapsacked Rambler treats of rood screens, fonts, pulpits, choir stalls, stained glass, with critical acumen and a thorough grasp of his subject. Finally, there are eighty-three illustrations, a glossary of technical words, and a capital index. This is a book that should be read.

DUBLIN HANDELIANA AND A HOSPITAL.

A HOLIDAY NOTE.

During a recent brief visit to Dublin I chanced, while making a short cut, to come upon Mercer's Hospital. 'Surely,' thought I, 'this is the Hospital to which Handel gave part proceeds resulting from the first performance of his "Messiah" in the Irish capital, in 1742. I'll go in and ask if the old Minute Books are still in existence.' The Registrar, Mr. John Robinson, courteously received me, and in a moment he brought forth from the safe those old and beautifully-kept records of 160 years ago. It appears that previous to Handel's arrival in Dublin it was the custom of the Governors of Mercer's Hospital to organize an annual performance of sacred music in St. Andrew's (the Round) Church, and it was owing to the benevolent zeal of these philanthropic gentlemen that the music of Handel was first introduced to the people of Dublin.

The first entry in the Minutes of the Governors that took my fancy was one dated February 13, 1741, as it contains an early reference to the duties of a conductor in the modern acceptation of the term—that is, one 'appointed to beat time.' Here it is:—

Whereas. The Deans of the two Cathedrals & Christ Church & St. Patrick's did in compliance with the request of the Governors of this Hospital direct that the Cathedral Service should be performed by the Choir as usual & whereas it is necessary for the more regular performance of the same that some Person should be appointed to beat time. Ordered that Mr. Church be requested to do the same in the manner he hath usually done it heretofore and that the same request be signified to Mr. Travernor.

The 'Mr. Church' above mentioned was doubtless Mr. John Church, at that time a vicar-choral of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. Three days later the Governors again met and—

Order'd That, the following Article be publish'd in the several News papers tomorrow (*viz.*):—

WEST DOOR OF THE LIEBFRAU KIRCHE AT TREVES.

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admittance that way quite impossible. Very grandly did the strains of Melchior Teschner's noble melody, associated in 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' with the Palm Sunday processional, 'All glory, laud and honour,' roll out from the crowded building and through the vaulted 'paradise' to the Domhof, where