Musical Notation. Practical Ways of Expressing Details of Musical Composition. Section V.
Accidentals (Continued)

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MUSICAL NOTATION.

PRACTICAL WAYS OF EXPRESSING
DETAILS OF MUSICAL COMPOSITION.

BY H. ELLIOT BUTTON.

(Continued from September number, p. 580.)

SECTION V.—ACCIDENTALS.

This comprehensive term is employed, for want of a better, to denote all sharps, flats, and naturals used apart from those in the key-signature.

An accidental is of course effective only in the bar in which it is written, but there are cases in which it is advisable to contradict it in the following bar, *e.g.*, if the particular note affected is the last in that bar and the first in the next, the accidental must be neutralised. In such passages as the following :

the natural to B must be neutralised in the next bar by a flat. But if one or more notes had intervened the flat would not have been necessary or even advisable.

It is well to use as few accidentals as possible without leaving your intention indefinite or questionable. Some composers are addicted to adding unnecessary accidentals for safety, but more often than not these so-called 'safety accidentals' lead to slips in execution. In fact the inclusion of an unnecessary accidental is more likely to mislead than the omission of one that should rightly be inserted, but about which there can be no doubt.

A few examples will show clearly the employment of necessary and unnecessary accidentals :

'I saw the Lord.' CUTHBERT HARRIS.

In this instance, were it not for the natural to D, the sopranos would be liable to read D sharp because they might naturally expect the chord of B major. There is, however, no need to add the natural to D in the accompaniment, for the organist, grasping the harmonic scheme, would not be liable to play anything but D natural.

In the following example also the F natural implies the D natural :

But note that the contrary would not be the case—the D natural would not imply F natural.

The following passage is an excellent example of the correct omission of an accidental.

The G in the melody must of necessity be natural, as it is an appoggiatura to the F; to add a natural would therefore be unnecessary.

There are, however, some cases in which a safety accidental is of great value. This passage :

was submitted to ten experienced musicians who were asked to read it at sight. The first stopped at the last crotchet, and after consideration played D#, but the other nine all played D# unhesitatingly. The reason is not difficult to discover. The D# in the previous crotchet is a grace note, and forms no part of the harmonic scheme. One therefore is inclined to take it for granted that the following D is D#, just as in the following example :

one would naturally play C# on the third crotchet, even if no # were printed, because the preceding C# is a grace note.

There is yet another reason why these musicians were misled into playing D#. It becomes a habit in reading contrapuntal compositions to follow mentally the various parts—to think horizontally, in fact, instead of vertically—and one is apt to forget that the # to D in the tenor also applies to the following D in the bass part. A sharp to the bass D is therefore not only advisable but necessary.

When an accidental occurs to a grace note there is no need to contradict it in the harmony note in the following bar, *e.g.* :

The natural to C is quite unnecessary, because the harmony is not affected by the grace note C sharp.

It will now be seen that there are several circumstances to be considered before deciding whether an accidental is advisable or superfluous.

If, when writing a piece with the signature of one sharp, you introduce a passage, say, in G minor, do not add a sharp to F unless you are sure it is necessary. Should you determine that the sharp is advisable, it should be used in every case throughout the passage, because the reader becomes accustomed to the sight of it, and, if it is omitted, will probably play F natural.

In enharmonic passages such as :

and—

there is obviously no need for a natural to E in the first, or a natural to B in the second.

In scale-passages extending over an octave there seems to be no uniformity among composers as to the repetition of accidentals, though the majority seem to be in favour of using them to each octave except where the sign *8va*..... is used, as in the following example :

It would seem to be more logical to add the accidentals to the last octave, since the notes are in a different position on the instrument.

The double-sharp and double-flat are sometimes contradicted by $\sharp\sharp$ and $\flat\flat$. These naturals are unnecessary, and therefore to be regretted, the simple sharp or flat being sufficient contradiction, and quite unmistakable. After all, C $\sharp$ can be nothing but C $\sharp$, even if a natural precede it ($\natural\sharp$ C). The same remark applies with equal force in the case of change of key-signature. When changing from the key of G to the key of B $\flat$, to insert a natural to contradict the F $\sharp$ before writing the two flats is unnecessary and clumsy. The principle, if carried to its logical conclusion, leads us into such an absurd complication as the following :

Even when changing from a key with three or four sharps in the signature to one with fewer sharps, the naturals may safely and with advantage be omitted :

The F $\sharp$ here is quite sufficient, and should the two naturals be added the signature may readily

be mistaken for one of three sharps if the light is bad or the player's eyesight indifferent. Such naturals, then, are not only useless but a source of danger.

When an appoggiatura makes it necessary for one note to bear two accidentals, great care must be taken

that the arrangement is as clear as possible. Compare the following :

The composer must be guided by circumstances as to which is the clearest method of notating such passages.

In the following :

the difficulty can be got over by an enharmonic change of the appoggiatura, thus :

Here the harmonic objection is perhaps outweighed by the enhanced clearness of notation. But it must be acknowledged that none of these examples is wholly satisfactory. Let us hope that some better method may yet be discovered.

An accidental should not be repeated at the beginning of a bar when the note is tied to one in a previous bar :

But there are exceptions to this rule, *e.g.* :

would look clearer if written thus :

(To be continued.)

Church and Organ Music.

THE COMPLEAT ORGANIST.

BY HARVEY GRACE.

X.—OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

(Continued from October number, p. 617.)

Clericus, Laicus, Organicus, Auctor.

Auctor.—Well, reverend sir, how go things at St. Abinadab's?

Clericus.—I'm afraid we are a little unsettled. You remember our homely musical ways, our hearty congregational singing and simple music? I fear 'tis all gone, thanks to our new organist, against whom I have not a word to say, save that he is too good a musician for us simple folk.

Auctor.—How so? Surely you can't have too good a musician as your organist.

Clericus.—I'm not so sure of that. Our people have been accustomed to making a joyful noise. We had a choir, but it was hardly necessary. It looked nice—some of it, at least—and the smoothing over of jealousies among the men, and the occasional handing over of a refractory boy to the secular arm, provided me with some sporting interest in the music. On the whole, we were uncultivated, but happy