The 'Missa de Angelis'

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Letters to the Editor.

THE 'MISSA DE ANGELIS.'

SIR,—Mr. Hughes's article in your September issue is very interesting reading; but in some of his statements he is surely in error. He says, *inter alia*, that the 'De Angelis' is given 'a place in the latest editions of the official books of Rome, after—but not among—the other Plainsong Masses of the "Ordinarium Missæ." I have half-a-dozen editions of the approved Vatican 'Ordinarium Missæ'—one obtained direct from Rome less than six months ago—and there is no indication in any of these of such an arrangement. None of my R.C. friends at Westminster Cathedral and elsewhere have heard of it; and I understand that the R.C. Bishop of Southwark has just ordered the 'De Angelis' Credo (Vatican, No. 3) to be sung in every church in his diocese on each Sunday throughout the year. No! What the Vatican authorities have done is to rearrange the 'Ordinarium Missæ.' The 'De Angelis' Mass, formerly No. 5, is now No. 8, and there are ten other Masses following it. The 'Missa Regia' is omitted altogether. Possibly Mr. Hughes has confused this Mass with the 'De Angelis.'

While writing on this subject, may I be permitted to offer some comments—the result of considerable study and experience—in connection with two other points suggested by Mr. Hughes's article?

(1.) It is often very difficult—indeed, practically impossible—to state with any degree of precision the date of a traditional Plainsong melody. The mode in which it is written is no indication whatsoever. Some of the most ancient melodies in the Gradual are in the 5th and 6th Modes—e.g., the Introit of the 'Missa de Profunctis,' the splendid Sanctus of Mass No. 17, &c. I imagine that the Solesmes Benedictines, in suggesting dates for the melodies of the 'Ordinarium Missæ,' after the examination of every available manuscript, have given proximate dates for the melodies in the form which they had assumed when they became, as it were, standardised. It is certain that many of the melodies, in less developed forms, are much older than the dates given. For example, it is generally believed that the Kyrie, 'Orbis Factor,' was either composed or developed from an older form of the melody by the Irish musician, S. Tutilo, in the 9th or 10th century; and it was further modified at a later date. The Solesmes Fathers give its date as (X), 14th-16th centuries; and this is, no doubt, a substantially accurate estimate of the age of the melody as an artistic element of the Church's music. Every melody in the 'Ordinarium Missæ' has been subjected to similar changes. Some time ago I tabulated the melodic variations in a 14th century MS. compared with the latest Vatican Ordinarium. In Credo No. 1 (the 'Old English Credo') there are at least forty variations; the Kyrie, 'Dominus Deus,' has been so much modified as to be hardly recognizable; and so on throughout. Perhaps the most permanent form of melody I have ever noticed is the 'Agnus Dei' of the Requiem (used also in Mass No. 18).

As regards the 'De Angelis' Kyrie, Mr. Hughes has shown that the melody is much older than the 15th-16th centuries. But its earlier form, as given by Mr. Hughes, is very crude when compared with the really beautiful and artistic melody now in the Gradual. I have myself formerly queried many of the dates suggested in the latest Gradual; but the more I have studied the subject the less I am inclined to doubt the conclusions of the patient and scholarly Solesmes investigators.

(2.) It must not hastily be assumed that a melody is a folk-song, or derived from one, on account of certain peculiarities of mode or outline. Any man who is looking out for melodic coincidences or similarities can find them on every hand. What is more likely than that the last part of the 'De Angelis' Kyrie was derived from 'Sumer is i-cumen in':

or both from 'Three Blind Mice?':

Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonata (Op 81a), his 'Leonora' Overture No 1, Wagner's Overture to the 'Flying Dutchman,' and many other notable compositions, are of course derived from the first phrase of 'Three Blind Mice'; while one of the most common Recitative formulae is found in 'Dashing away with the Smoothing-iron':

Your thorough-going, fully-obsessed folk-songist will accept almost anything. One of them solemnly assured me some time ago that 'most of the melodies in the Ordinarium Missæ are of folk-song origin, the Kyries in particular being suffused with the folk-song idiom.'

All through the ages ecclesiastical and secular melodies have run along, so to speak, in two adjacent streams, acting and reacting on each other. Often this mutual intercourse has been helpful to both; but whenever the secular stream has seriously encroached on the other the result has been disastrous. Witness, for example, the state of music in the Roman Church in the middle of the 16th century. It is said that some members of the Council of Trent, 1545-63, even went so far as to suggest the exclusion of all music from the Church Services.

By all means let us encourage Mr. Hughes and other scholars to continue their interesting historical investigations; but we must avoid being side-tracked by minor issues.—Yours, &c.,

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Wandsworth Common, S.W.-18.

THE GRAMOPHONE AS AN AID TO MUSICAL APPRECIATION.

SIR,—I have been much interested in the two letters on the above subject which appeared in the September and October issues of the *Musical Times*. A gramophone record lasts no longer than four minutes, and cuts have to be made in the music in order to present an overture or a movement from a quartet in that space of time. Your September correspondent suggests that the invention of the double turntable would solve the difficulty. The double turntable would, I presume, imply a double arm and sound-box, so that the needle on the first sound-box could be changed while the second sound-box was playing the second record. But such an instrument would be of little use for playing the best double-sided records that are now being produced. These records have, say, the first movement of a quartet on one side, and the second movement on the other. Clearly the second movement, or the second part of any double-sided record, could not follow immediately on the first; the record must be turned. The point has some importance, because it is possible to obtain now—and this is due mainly to the enterprise of the 'Columbia' firm—an excellent series of double-sided records of chamber-music. Thus there are published, each on two records, both double-sided, Elgar's Violin Concerto, Beethoven's 'Kreutzer' and 'Spring' Sonatas, and Quartets by Beethoven, Mozart, Ravel, and Schumann. There are also published two movements each (one double-sided record) of a Brahms Quintet, Violin Sonatas by César Franck and Grieg, and Quartets by Brahms, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Glazounov, Dvorák, and others. The series is being continued, and will have grown considerably by the time the double-turntable invention could appear on the market. And when it did appear, it would have no advantage over our present instruments in the playing of these records. Until, therefore, an entirely