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ISRAEL'S MUSIC-LESSON IN EGYPT.

BY JEFFREY PULVER.

About thirty-two centuries ago the sandy shores of the Red Sea witnessed a remarkable sight. A huge band of fugitives, numbering, we are told, six hundred thousand male adults in addition to a comparatively large number of women and children, stood on the littoral and gazed in awe-struck amazement upon the overwhelming disaster that overtook the pursuing host. Gratitude to a beneficent Providence for their escape opened their lips, and their leader sang: 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea' (Ex. xv., 1.). That band of emancipated bondmen was destined to have a greater influence on the morals and religion of the civilised world than any other nation of antiquity. But besides this distinction the newly freed people possessed another: in an art necessitating the highest mental development they attained to a degree of excellence unequalled in any other nation,—a precedence which they have, to a certain extent, held until the present day.

The Israelites of the Patriarchal age were not musical in the technical sense; they were a comparatively small clan of pastorals; they possessed the poetry of pastorals used in combination with the music of pastorals. They had the heart and the inspiration, but they had not the science. In Egypt they learned how to adapt the marvellous instruments possessed by their hosts to the requirements of their latent desire for musical expression. When the family of Jacob arrived in Egypt they found a hearty welcome awaiting them: the rulers were Hyksos—Shepherd Kings—and in tastes and habits these must have had much in common with the Israelites. The Patriarch settled at Heliopolis (On) in the land of Goshen, a district populated by a mixed people—partly Egyptian, partly alien. In such surroundings they could develop whatever traits they possessed without attracting too much attention to themselves. They had brought with them the *Kinnor* and *Ugav* invented by Jubal (Gen. iv. 21)—possibly improvements upon them, and also certain Syrian instruments that they had learned to use from their erstwhile neighbours. But between these comparatively primitive instruments and the musical glories of the Temple there was great disparity, and it is in Egypt that I seek the source of Israel's real musical greatness. The soul for the art was their divine gift; it was from the mathematically-minded physicists of Egypt that they learned how to make of music a science as well as an art.

When attempting to seek proofs and reasons for these statements we must keep three points in view. The first is that Israel was long enough in Egypt to become Egyptianised in every respect except in religious faith,—and even in that, there is evidence to be found in the Chapters of the Exodus dealing with the wandering in the Desert to show that this also was, to a degree, influenced by Egyptian thought. The second is that although the Egyptians incarnated their deities to satisfy the popular mind, there was otherwise very little difference between their views of life in general and those of the Israelites, and many of their manners and customs were identical; we can thus expect them to sympathise with one another and thus learn from each other. The third point is that Israel did not groan under the goad of the taskmaster all the time of their sojourn, and that before the accession of the Pharaoh 'who knew not Joseph,' they enjoyed a long period of peace, prosperity, and development. I do not therefore think I shall be accused of taking too much for granted when I assert

that during four centuries of such conditions the music of Israel and that of Egypt became, for all practical purposes, identical.

Let us glance at the condition of the country at the time of Israel's arrival. Egypt was undoubtedly the cradle of the arts, and in that of music we know her to have been pre-eminent. We are supplied with information in this respect more fully than in the case of any other ancient nation; the tombs of kings and priests, mural paintings, and inscriptions tell us of a musical activity and excellence that are astonishing. We find illustrations of instruments that for beauty of design, soundness of construction, and musical efficiency, stand high above those of even much younger peoples. The pages of any history of Egypt, and notably those of Wilkinson's 'Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,' provide sufficient evidence for the most sceptical. The arts flourished, and wondrously perfect instruments of music were used, long before Joseph was made Grand Vizier. Harps, lyres, and three-stringed guitars, besides the usual wind and percussion common to even primitive nations, were in everyday use 'from the earliest periods of their known history' (Wilkinson). The Egyptian himself was easy-going, simple, and fond of innocent amusement; his first object was to enjoy his earthly life as thoroughly as he could in accordance with the tenets of his faith; his aims were lofty and sincere, and he had a well-developed love for the Beautiful. Could such a people as the Israelites—who were and are ever ready to assimilate the good things of their hosts and neighbours—be left untouched by an art that had already reached such a high plane of excellence in Egypt? Joseph was not the first Semite to see Egypt: from the time of Abraham's visit onward such wanderers often came and went, and thus Israel could not have been utterly ignorant of what awaited them on the banks of the Nile.

The invasion of the Hyksos was not a crushing blow to Egyptian progress: Manetho says there was not even a battle; and the onward march of development in the arts could not have suffered any great check. Under this sympathetic régime the Israelites commenced to take their music-lessons from their Egyptian teachers. But before inquiring into the state of music in Egypt, it will be well first to ascertain which period we have to consider. The date of the Exodus is variously given: we need not now go into the details that rightly occupy the pages of histories of Egypt; for our present purpose a date that will allow the main facts of history to fit in will suffice. The cities of Pithom and Raamses were built before the departure of the Israelites—that is certain; and this fact, in addition to others that need not be mentioned here, must place the migration after the reign of Rameses II., and during that of one of his two immediate successors, Menepthah II. (Mer-n-Ptah), or Seti II. (Manetho, Sethos Ramesses). The latter would give us the date 1270-1250 B.C. Adding the four hundred and thirty years of the sojourn to this, we arrive at c. 1700 B.C. Between these two dates, then, we have to examine the evidence relating to Egypt's musical activity.

The pictorial representations of instruments, musicians, dancers, &c., on the tombs, appear very early in the history of Egypt; they include singers, flute-players, harpists, lutists and others, and we find them in almost every period, only differing in the stage of development of the instruments and only absent during the periods of invasion and war. The harp was of native Egyptian origin, and passed through a long process of improvement: beginning with a simple curved support holding a stretched string, and ending with the wonderful creations that Bruce discovered on,

and copied from, the walls of a Theban sepulchre. These last belong to the reign of Rameses III., and are thus later than the Exodus; but in no country could such magnificent instruments—over six feet high and beautifully made and ornamented—be developed in a short time; and if the Israelites did not actually see the final triumph of the Egyptian harp-maker's art, they saw enough of the intermediate stages to show them the possibilities of the instrument that attained to such an important position in the Temple of Solomon. This last statement depends upon our correctness or otherwise in translating the Hebrew *Kinnor* by 'Harp'; there is another instrument, which will be mentioned again later, that seems to agree with the descriptions of the *Kinnor* more closely. However, there can be no doubt that Israel did use the harp in the same way as it was used in Egypt, and Assyria also. Better than any description is a view of one of these instruments. Although we do not, unfortunately, possess a specimen of the larger harp, the British Museum has at least one very interesting example of the smaller hand-harp. This belongs to the Eighteenth Dynasty, and would date from about 1450 B.C. The *Nefet*, a species of guitar, was also very popular; it was a three-stringed instrument with a long neck, fingered on a fretted fingerboard—arguing the existence of music in a highly-developed state. Wind instruments are represented by single and double pipes (with finger-holes), and trumpets for military uses; and a rich array of percussion—tambourine, drum, gong, bell, cymbals, sistrum, &c.—is also found portrayed. The art seems to have been seriously studied, and pictures of music-schools are forthcoming: one, dating from the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1370 B.C.), shows a variety of instruments, and the manner after which they were used. Several paintings show concerts and musical entertainments of almost every sort. The wealthy maintained a paid staff of musicians, and every banquet was accompanied by vocal and instrumental music. Blind singers, their melodies strengthened by flutes and accompanied by harps, were a common feature, and women with castanets or cymbals marked the time while others danced. And if music occupied such an exalted place in the secular life of the Egyptians, we find it playing a still more important rôle in their religion. Large bands of singers were attached to the temples, whole families often being employed together; hymns were sung solo, and the refrain chanted by a chorus; and sacred dances were performed to the rhythm-maintaining sound of cymbals, bells, and sistra, around the representations of the deities. All these things we see repeated in the religious services of Hebrews and Christians. Wilkinson says: 'Like the Egyptians with whom they had so long resided, and many of whose customs they adopted, the Jews carefully distinguished sacred from profane music.' In Egypt the 'sacred musicians were of the order of priests, and appointed to the service like the Levites among the Jews; and the Egyptian sacred bands were probably divided and superintended in the same manner as among that people.' This, from so careful an authority as Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, must be considered; but I would rather read: '... the sacred bands of the Temple were divided and superintended in the same manner as among the Egyptians.' The ritual dance, too—another inheritance from Egypt—was much employed by the Jews (*vide* my article 'The dance in religion,' *Commonwealth*, April, 1912).

But although we know so much of their instruments and of the uses to which they were put, we know very little of the music itself. The Egyptians, like the Jews, seem to have had no regular system of notation, for

otherwise it would be but reasonable to expect two such nations of scribes to have left documentary evidence of the art. I do not consider the sign-system used by the Jews to indicate their cantillation a system of musical notation. No written music of any sort has been discovered, and we can only guess at the nature of that performed in Egypt. It is highly probable that Greece, much later, borrowed her tetrachord system from the land of the Nile, and there should be more than a suspicion that Israel also took away with her that basis for further development. The character of the Egyptian vocal music—and especially that of the sacred music—must have been noble and moving; if it had anything of the simple grandeur of the verses which were set to it, it must have been capable, as Naumann says, of very great effects.

The Israelites, then, were assimilating all this musical lore and were using it in their own expressive manner; at the same time Moses was being brought up in the priestly colleges and acquiring all the knowledge of the priests, music being one of their chief assets. It was then that the character of the ruling house changed. In c. 1600 B.C., Amasis I., expelling the Hyksos, established the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egyptian kings (from Thebes). The sympathies that had existed between alien kings and alien settlers were gone. Soon the rulers expected serf-labour from the honoured immigrants of a century back; and later the labour was demanded without recompense. Then blows were added, and with the accession of Rameses II. we arrive at the period when the oppression became unbearable. The family of seventy souls had by now grown to be a nation, and it grasped its staff and set out for a promised land.

Israel during the years of the wandering in the Desert is interesting because here we obtain occasional glimpses of Egypt through the newly re-acquired exterior of the Hebrew. Sir John Stainer thinks that 'the glorious song of Moses was most probably sung to some simple Egyptian chant, well known and popular.' It is only a supposition, of course, and I do not think it is strengthened by the fact that the text was extempore; still, as Moses was initiated in all the lore of the Egyptian priests, and, as the writer of the Acts of the Apostles (vii. 22) says, was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,' he might conceivably have adapted his verses to a well-known Egyptian air. 'Then took Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances' (Ex. xv. 20). That the women should go after her with dances is again a circumstance reflecting scenes from the Nile. Shortly before the accession of the Eighteenth Dynasty we see the men gradually becoming scarcer in the representations of the music and dances used in conjunction with the funeral rites of Egypt, and after this line had been in power for but a short time, we see this part of the ritual almost exclusively in the hands of the women. The instrument, which in the English Bible is generally given as 'timbrel,' would have been the small Egyptian hand-drum (Hebrew, *Toph*), or a species of tambourine. In many Egyptian wall-paintings we see this instrument in the hands of women taking part in processions, the tambourine used being not only circular, but often oblong with incurved sides. It was but natural that these thoroughly Egyptianised women should reconstruct such a procession when there was occasion for rejoicing. As soon as discontent showed itself, Egypt again made her influence felt; the bull of Apis was modestly imitated by a calf of gold, and the Egyptian ritual dance was performed. Moses and Joshua, descending from the Mount, heard the jubilant noise of the imitation

idolaters (Ex. xxxii. 18, 19): it was a 'noise of them that sing'; and 'when he came nigh unto the camp . . . he saw the calf, and the dancing,'—so thoroughly had Israel learned her lessons in Egypt. On this occasion the cymbals were also most probably employed. In Egypt they were in very common use to mark the time for the dancers, and in the religious cult they found a place. In the British Museum may be seen the mummy of a priest who was buried with his cymbals, the latter being at present exhibited in the same case. With the Jews they had the onomatopœic name of *Tziltzelim* (*Tziltzil*), and they are mentioned in Ps. cl. The Egyptian *Sistrum*, too, was borrowed by the Israelites. In its original form it consisted of a racquet-shaped frame of bronze having transverse bars or rods (generally three, though four are to be met with) that, fitting loosely in the frame, produced a jingling sound upon being shaken. Often metal rings were strung on to the bars to increase their noise-producing powers. The instrument, if it can be so called, was chiefly used in Egypt as an adjunct to the religious service—principally of Isis—and its handle was often ornamented with one or other of the attributes of this goddess. When a priestess died, her sistrum was buried with her in the same way as in the case of the cymbals already mentioned. Its use was, I suppose, to call attention to certain passages in the service, and Berlin Papyrus No. 1425, containing the Laments of Isis and Nephthys, has the phrase 'Behold the excellent sistrum-bearer' several times; British Museum Papyrus No. 10188 also shows the sentence or a variation of it some half-a-dozen times. The instrument was also used on the battlefield—whether to invoke divine aid, or to intimidate the enemy with the sound, I cannot say—and it figured in royal processions. The Israelitic sistrum differed, according to the illustration in Hawkins' 'History of Music,' in having a circular frame with metal rings strung on to a single bar. The Hebrew name for it seems to have been the *Menan'im* mentioned in II. Sam. vi. 5. The Authorised Version erroneously has 'cornets' at this place, 'cymbals' not being applicable, as the word *betziltzilim* (= with cymbals) is thus translated. A Viennese translation in my possession gives *menan'im* as 'bells,' which is possible though not probable. Winer and Saalschütz (to quote Carl Engel) think they see in this word the Hebrew for sistrum, and Newman (1832), connecting *menan'im* with *nu'a*=shaken, strengthens this supposition, since the sistrum was the only instrument of percussion that was played exclusively by shaking. The Vulgate, also, translates it as 'sistrum.' The bell was also used by the Israelites, and was called *Pamon*; we find it thus named in Ex. xxviii. 33, 34, where we are told that golden bells and pomegranates were to be sewn alternately on to the hem of the High Priest's garments. This use is exactly the one to which the Egyptians put the small bell; the British Museum has several such instruments that were once most probably used on the priests' robes. The smaller ones, which were used for this purpose, vary from three-quarters of an inch to about one and a-half inches in height. The Israelitic custom of having bells on the priest's robe no doubt survives to-day in the bells that adorn the ornamental crowns on the Scroll of the Law.

In Ex. xix. 16, 19, and xx. 18, the 'trumpet' is mentioned. In these passages the word *shofar* would have been better translated by 'horn.' The *shofar* was the ram's horn, still used to commemorate the orders given in Numbers, x. 2, *et seq.*, by the Jews of the present day in the Service for the New Year. This instrument was most probably an ancient

possession of Israel, a legacy of the days of the Patriarchal herdsmen. But after the Exodus they also had trumpets of metal. These we find in Egypt in nearly all the pictorial representations of military activity; the troops were summoned by drum and trumpet, the latter being a perfectly straight tube opening out towards one end into a bell. In a mural painting on the tomb of Horemheb we are shown half-a-dozen spearmen and an officer parading; in front of them stands a 'bugler' blowing such a trumpet. This instrument, increased in size and wrought in precious metal, would bring us to the true Hebrew trumpet—the silver instruments, generally mentioned as being in pairs; this was the *Chatzozeroth*, which is represented on the Arch of Titus, and concerning the shape of which no doubt can exist.

One more instrument deserves mention because it was most probably of Israelitic origin, and not obtained from Egypt—the lyre or *Kithara*. At about the time of Joseph's arrival in Egypt a scene was painted on the walls of a tomb at Beni Hassan representing the arrival of strangers. The latter are depicted as being lighter in colour than the Egyptians, they are distinctly Semitic in features, and they have black beards, a facial ornament that the Egyptians did not affect. Some writers think this picture represents the actual arrival of Jacob and his family, and, but for discrepancy in their numbers, it could conceivably do so. Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson gives the illustration in his 'Manners and Customs, &c.,' and describes it together with the lyre that one of the men is carrying. He says: 'If . . . the strangers at Beni Hassan should prove to be the arrival of Jacob's family in Egypt, we may examine the Jewish Lyre drawn by an Egyptian artist . . .'; the man carrying the instrument is one of the last of the procession and he is playing it with a plectrum. Wilkinson goes on to say that 'the lyre is rude, and differs in form from those generally used in Egypt.' This is without doubt the *Kinnor* of the Bible; it was the instrument said in Genesis to have been invented or used by Jubal, and it is also very frequently named in the Psalms. There is every reason to believe that it was this *Kithara* that David used; at any rate, we find such lyres—differing in shape and construction, of course—as late as the Maccabean period, when they are to be found represented on coins. Egyptian forms of the instrument are preserved in the Museums of Leyden and Berlin. It can be seen at once from these specimens that they differ from those depicted at Beni Hassan; but whether the Egyptians improved upon the Israelitic instrument, or whether the Jews adapted some of the better points in an instrument already naturalized in Egypt to their own, it is impossible now to say. But in any case neither of the two forms is of purely Egyptian origin; if the people of the Nile did not have it from Israel, they received it from some other Asiatic immigrants, and it has not the same monumental antiquity in Egypt as have the simpler forms of the harp. Thus Israel may possibly have made some small return for the many musical lessons it learned there by suggesting the lyre to the Egyptians. The Greek *Kithara* was very like these two forms, except that it was probably much improved before it became popular in Greece.

It will not be possible to mention the other Hebrew instruments, such as the *Ugav* (pipe or flute, variously translated in different Bibles as 'wind-instruments,' 'flutes,' and even 'organs'), the *Nevel* (nabulum), *Minim* (Hebrew: *Mini*, *Minim*=strings of an instrument), used to name an unknown stringed instrument, or to designate the family of 'strings' collectively, and others. The *Kithara* was noticed

because it is possible that Egypt improved it ; this she may have done for the others, but we have no documentary or pictorial proofs.

All I have written was not set down to rob the Israelites of all their musical initiative ; it was only my intention to show how much of her music she owed to Egypt, and to show that besides being influenced by the land of the Pyramids in many things, her music also was developed, improved, and put to a multitude of uses in Egypt. Every oppressed nation becomes music-loving ; or, better said, oppression will bring out the music that is latent in any nation, and Israel undoubtedly had a very great aptitude for the art. All she needed was to learn how to make artistic instruments capable of giving again premeditated musical thought, and to base her music upon a system that permitted of the development of form and harmony. While claiming that for these purposes Egypt was an exceedingly good teacher, it must also be conceded that Israel was an amazingly good pupil.

THE CARNEGIE UNITED KINGDOM TRUST.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS TO CHURCH ORGANS.

This Trust was brought into being in October, 1913, for the purpose of administering the interest derived from over £2,000,000 provided by Mr. Carnegie to aid in the erection of public libraries and to assist churches of all denominations to acquire organs. The Trust took up this responsibility after the fund had been managed by another organization. The first annual report of the executive committee of the new Trust has just been issued. We quote the paragraphs that have to do with organs.

‘The first step taken by the executive committee was to inquire into the general results of the expenditure made by Mr. Carnegie, and latterly by the Carnegie Corporation of New York on his behalf, in providing church organs and public libraries in the United Kingdom. To assist them in these inquiries they invited Mr. David Stephen, Principal of the School of Music in Dunfermline, to report on the influence on musical culture exerted by Mr. Carnegie’s organ benefactions.

‘CHURCH ORGANS.

‘Mr. Carnegie has expended a sum of about £500,000 on assisting in the acquisition of organs by churches of all denominations in the United Kingdom. His avowed purpose in making this expenditure was in the first place to improve the service of praise, and by the interest in music thus created to extend the knowledge of and love for music throughout the community generally. The grants were made on the condition that at least half the cost of the instruments was met by local endeavour. In addition to the sum mentioned above, the Trustees have paid a further sum of £26,864 during the period under review, in fulfilment of outstanding promises, . . . which were current at the inception of the Trust. Further there existed a large number of other cases in which, although a definite promise had not been given, preliminary correspondence had taken place and substantial expectations of assistance had been created. Investigation of these cases resulted in definite promises of assistance being given to the extent of £25,419. Thus a total sum of about £550,000 has been or will be expended on this form of benefaction, and this sum represents grant aid for the acquisition of about 3,500 organs.

‘The Trust Deed in its preamble recites Mr. Carnegie’s view that “the calls for organs will decrease considering the large number already supplied, particularly if it be understood, as I desire that it may, that only such congregations shall receive grants as are in needy circumstances and unable to provide organs for themselves.” The figures quoted above indicate the very large number of congregations which have been assisted. The executive

committee is convinced, moreover, from its consideration of the numerous cases which have come before it, that the circumstances of a large number of the applicants are such that means do not exist for the efficient maintenance of the instrument and for the salary of a properly qualified organist should an organ be acquired. In such cases it is evident that the primary purpose of such grants cannot be realised. Unfortunately, many churches have so meagre an income that the salary of the pastor is a mere pittance, and the ordinary church expenses are barely met ; in many instances also, there is a heavy burden of debt. If in these cases there have to be added the upkeep expense of an organ and the salary of an organist, the general financial circumstances of the congregation are unjustifiably strained. The larger interests of such applicants would probably best be studied by refusal of their request for what must prove an additional burden on their resources.

‘DISCONTINUANCE OF ORGAN GRANTS FOR THE PRESENT.

‘After careful consideration, the executive committee during the course of the year announced publicly that the Trustees could not undertake in the meantime the consideration of further applications for organs, in view of the large number already submitted, and the heavy expenditure involved by the favourable consideration of even a portion of them. The number of new applications submitted between the date of the formation of the Trust and the date of this announcement amount to 1,044. These applications will be considered as rapidly as possible, but after decisions have been arrived at upon them, the executive committee proposes to suspend, until further notice, the resumption of its activities in this direction. The result of this decision will not mean that grants for organs will forthwith be discontinued, since a considerable time will probably elapse before the conditions, on which promised grants are made, will be fulfilled. The raising locally of one-half of the cost of the instrument will necessarily be one of the conditions to be satisfied precedent to the payment of a grant, and in most cases of the kind which call for consideration under the instructions of the Trust Deed, local endeavour has to be exerted for a prolonged period before the necessary funds are obtained, and the promised aid can be claimed. Promises of conditional assistance cannot, however, be made valid for an indefinite period, and a reasonable time-limit will have to be imposed within which the aid of the Trust may be claimed.

‘There are doubtless other means by which the love of music may be fostered and Mr. Carnegie’s desire realised. It may be possible to render financial assistance to various musical activities which already exist, or which may hereafter be initiated, for the benefit of the masses of the people. On these questions, however, the executive committee has not had sufficient time or opportunity as yet to come to any decision, even of a tentative or experimental nature.’

DEATH OF DENIS BROWNE.

English music suffers a heavy loss by the death of William Denis Browne, who was killed in action at the Dardanelles on June 7. He was of Irish descent, though born in England, being great-grandson of the Hon. Denis Browne, whose elder brother became first Marquess of Sligo. Educated at Rugby, where he received a thorough grounding in music, he came to Cambridge in October, 1907, as a classical scholar of Clare College. He did well in the classical tripos, and in 1910 became organist of his College. It was mainly owing to his energies that the beautiful new organ was built. He was a pupil of Dr. Charles Wood for composition and of Dr. Gray for organ. He also studied the pianoforte with Miss Ursula Newton, a pupil of Busoni. He soon became the leader of undergraduate music in Cambridge, being an accomplished pianist and having a great gift for conducting and organization. He was an intimate friend of