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DECEMBER 6, 1886.

MAJOR GEORGE A. CRAWFORD
IN THE CHAIR

*THE HIGHER TRAINING OF CHURCH
MUSICIANS AND CHOIRS.*

BY W. DE M. SERGISON, ORGANIST AND DIRECTOR OF THE
CHOIR OF S. PETER'S, EATON SQUARE.

I TAKE it for granted that I am in sympathy with the object of this Association in bringing before you one phase of musical work, which is of national interest, for discussion—viz., “The higher training of church organists, choir-masters, and choirs.” So large a proportion of our musical youth aspire to enrol themselves in the service of the Church, that the training they receive becomes a momentous question for our future as a musical nation.

A sincere desire to emphasize the importance of this subject induces me, at the request of your Council, with all humility to bring it before you. I am most anxious not to hurt anyone's feelings. You will take what I have to say for what it is worth, and I trust discuss and turn my theories inside out, so that we may get a really valuable expression of opinion from the wisdom and experience of those here assembled, whom I have the honour to address.

To plunge then *in medias res*, advance, progress is vital to artistic life, and “Excelsior” (or more properly *Excelsius*) must be the motto of every true artist, were it not that in these days of keen competition stagnation is becoming almost impossible. We cannot all, however, be great geniuses, and there are many who, even if they had the talent, can never have the opportunity of rising beyond a certain level; therefore the musical culture of the nation must always be a question of degree, according to the aims, abilities, and opportunities of individuals.

I cannot but feel that our insularity has a baneful influence upon the musical growth of our young church musicians; art cannot be insular; it is broad, universal. It seems to me that we are prone to go on in a narrow groove, and are not very disposed to see what others are doing. I refer specially here to those who are brought up in the country. There is

a want of breadth and comprehensiveness in the education these men receive ; they aim too low, and the result is that dull routine crushes out the divine spark. The training that a student gets at a foreign Conservatoire is so comprehensive, he hears so much, he comes into contact with so many that excel in all branches of the art, that he is daily assimilating fresh knowledge and developing the powers of an artist. These privileges are not within the reach of most of our students, and the average youth who wishes to make church music his profession has only two aims in life—to be an organist and to have a degree.

Now, I venture to say that this is not enough, and that the pursuit of the quest turns out many very dull creatures ; narrow-minded, with but little knowledge of, and sympathy with, the great world of art beyond their narrow ken, gradually losing interest in what they do, and so failing to interest others, and remaining always mediocre.

The causes of this result seem to me to arise—first, from youths being encouraged to make it the object of their ambition to be organists only, instead of aiming higher—viz., to be artists, complete musicians in the highest sense ; and second, from the want of breadth and comprehensiveness of their education.

Let us glance at the career of some country pupils of, say, cathedral organists. The pupil's musical horizon is limited to the church services, a little old world piano music (if the teacher happens to take that instrument under his patronage at all !), and a very occasional concert of possibly not very high class music from some passing company of musicians. After five or six years of travelling along this level plain, he is qualified to play a service and some organ music, and is ready to fill any post that may offer ; with the fountains of love for music and higher aspirations dried up in his heart from weariness of the cathedral groove, the uninteresting listless performances of the choir, the tedium of theoretical study ; with nothing to stimulate him to put his theoretical knowledge into practice, hearing nothing that quickens his spirit to a real love of the noble art for its own sake ; having no higher aim before him, from the narrow basis of his education, from dearth of novelty, life, companionship in art, sympathy, from want of anything to excite his ambition to rise ; and from moving in a little, narrow circle, the enthusiasm he once felt is apt to sink into apathy, and he gradually resigns himself to his fate and becomes a commonplace, spiritless drudge.

The responsibility that rests with the masters in these cases is manifestly great. If they do not instil into their pupils' minds a high ambition, enlarge their views, and, by sympathy, encourage them in their arduous career ; if they

have not Catholic sympathies in art, let them be ever so good as theorists, their scholarship ever so classic, that love of art which is *vital* will wither and die in the pupil's breast, and the higher aims and aspirations once awakened in him will become callous and fade away.

The training a man gets at a cathedral is very good in its way up to a certain point. It is an experience every church musician should have, for it is only there he can thoroughly learn his business; but the mistake is to limit the studies to the music connected with it—to stop there. I feel sure that when men are encouraged to aim higher than being merely organists, to make themselves *artists*, thorough musicians, when ecclesiastical studies are only *part* of the scheme of education, they are more likely to preserve their *vitality*, and to put out feelers into the higher realms of art in the future; perhaps, some day, blossom into conductors and composers, finding fresh fields and pastures new for themselves and their pupils, and to rise above the level of mediocrity.

It may be urged that youths who are articulated pupils have no time for more than they do—all I can say is that men who have been pupils at country cathedrals have said to me, "When the cathedral service was over at four o'clock our *music* was over for the day, we thought no more about it." Imagine the waste of time! and the *way* these men have to make up!

And now with regard to University degrees. There is a great misapprehension in the minds of the general public as to the worth and importance of a degree to a church musician. It is an English superstition that a man cannot be worth much without one, and that it is a *cachet* of efficiency, exactly in the same sense as a degree in medicine. It is nothing of the sort, so the sooner this superstition is exploded the better. The degree of a physician certifies his proficiency in theoretical and practical knowledge and experience. The degree in music is, as we all know, purely theoretical, and as regards practical efficiency a man who boasts a Mus. Bac. or Mus. Doc. may be, to use a vulgarism, "the greatest duffer out." A case in point occurs to me. A relation of mine once said to a member of a congregation, where the music was remarkable for its utter badness, "I hear the music at your church is so bad." "Oh, dear no," said the unmusical individual, "it is very good, it must be; why our organist is a Doctor of Music and *wears his hood!*"

Joking apart, is it not the case that those Englishmen who have come to the front as conductors and composers are *not* the men who have made an English University degree their *highest* aim, but men of wider culture, who have refused to put themselves into narrow trammels, but have made their studies broad, Catholic, and versatile?

Let it not be thought that I wish to disparage University degrees, or to ignore the efforts that are being made to encourage art in the examinations; but I say it is a bad thing for a man to make it his *summum bonum*, the pinnacle he never hopes to soar above. If a man, having once attained it, rests on his oars, aims no higher, he has small chance of ever attaining to the higher walks of art.

It is a good omen for the future that a higher intellectual standard and a wider cultivation is now necessary to pass the arts examination; but I cannot think that a University degree is desirable for all. The necessary hard work at theory often saps the energies of men for practical work, and leaves them exhausted; the time and strength they have to give to it narrows their scope of study and gives them too little time to improve themselves in other respects. After all, it is but a somewhat one-sided view of art (though it may be a terribly heretical theory to advance), as it is proverbial that you must adopt your examiner's or professor's views and theories! And is it not to be regretted that practical efficiency is *not* guaranteed thereby?

Among all the men who are turned out as organists from cathedrals, academies, and so on, how few good choir trainers there are! It is said to be a rare gift—for my own part I cannot see why it need be if a man has a good training, and is blest with a good ear and a little commonsense.

"Show me a good choir trainer," said a great church musician to me some years ago. A distinguished cathedral organist said to me last year, "We want a school for educating men as choir trainers, and I feel the want of it more and more every day." This is a gospel I have been preaching myself for years, and feel the truth of it wherever I go.

At the Royal College of Music, for instance, men are educated on the broadest possible basis in every branch of the art; but this important phase is left out, so that a man may pass through the whole course there, and turn out an accomplished practical and theoretical musician; but the principal work he will have to do if he wishes to become a good church musician he will know nothing of from what he has learnt there—viz., the training of a choir.

I have often thought that if a special department in any London Academy—the Royal College, the Royal Academy, or, perhaps, the Guildhall School in course of time—could be established, whereby special training could be given to those who wish to qualify as church musicians, it would meet a great want. If a diploma were granted from this institution, which would not only be a *cachet* of advanced theoretical knowledge, and at the same time of practical efficiency, in those branches of accomplishment required of

a good church musician, it would be a prize worth striving for, and the possessors of it would be thoroughly equipped for the ever increasing demands upon their powers, owing to the growth and increasing popularity of church music.

It has struck me as being extraordinary that distinguished musicians should not realise that it is one thing to be a good organist and another to be a good choir trainer.

The special training a man gets in accompanying psalms, canticles, hymns, and anthems at a cathedral or church, he does not get at the London Academy, and the training in the fulness of the art that he gets in the London Academy he loses at the country cathedral. But even at the country cathedral the student gets but very limited experience in choir training. Cathedral singing is, after all, very little more than quartet or double quartet singing, as distinguished from *chorus* singing—congregational singing is hardly taken into account—and as regards the quality and voice production of the boys, for my own part, I have but seldom heard anything passable in this respect in a country cathedral, judging by the standard of excellence that I know *can* be attained by boys.

Let us now turn our attention to what the qualifications for a thoroughly efficient church musician really are.

A man *ought* to be ambitious—art is a great and imperious mistress, she will have *all* or none. The devotion of a lifetime, and all the energies we possess is not too much. If it is taken up in a half-hearted negligent way, nothing great will ever be accomplished, and mediocrity is the inevitable outcome.

The first thing is the *spirit* in which the work is undertaken, and the life devoted to the shrine of art. It is not the man, or the manner, the performance, the discourse, or whatever the undertaking may be that really influences people; it is the *spirit* that underlies what is said or done, the motive that actuates that makes itself felt through all, and is the *real* power.

The artist who desires to devote the first fruits and the best of his energies to church music, feels that it is a privilege while he is working for legitimate success and advance, that his work is at the same time a benefit to mankind, and derives new strength and energy from the reflection.

The question of remuneration underlies all other considerations naturally, and so perhaps it is as well to mention it here. As a rule, the pay is poor and niggardly in the extreme, and this cannot be too often said. Pay, less than a servant's or day labourer's is often offered for a good organist and choirmaster. More than this, so much more work is expected from the musician than the miserable stipend in any way warrants, that if he did not do far more

than even the clergy require of him, he would be considered inefficient, and probably be cashiered. The more publicly this is emphasized the better.

The increasing demand for superior men may be one means of improving matters in this respect. There is no doubt that the best qualified men will take the best places.

A man of resources can help out his income in other ways, and if a lofty motive underlies his church work it elevates at once the artist and audience, it cannot fail to meet with its sure reward. I am of opinion that the man who wishes to be a master of the craft, a complete artist, should be prepared to embody the positions of organist and choirmaster. To divide these offices seems to me a *prima facie* argument of incompetence on the part of each officer, and an element of weakness and discord. I think I am not wrong in saying that it is the rule in most cathedrals and college chapels for the organist to be choirmaster; so I think it should be always. I can only conceive of one arrangement which could work really well where two officiate, and that is where the choirmaster is supreme, and the organist either his pupil or one who acts entirely under his instructions, and carries them out to the letter.

The choirmaster-organist should have a very large discretion in the choice of music within the limits fixed by his clergy. He should show so much wisdom and tact in this respect as to make his position unassailable. It appears to me beyond question that when a man has the ability to teach a choir upon definite principles, that he is the best person to accompany them, when he can give point and emphasis to his teaching. His playing and teaching are consistent, a definite effect is aimed at and attained, which both choir and congregation will co-operate with willingly if a man manages well.

Theological knowledge and perception is essential that his interpretation of the psalms, canticles, and creeds may be appropriate, that his music may fulfil its highest function—the re-inforcing, the (so to speak) fresh revelation of the great truths of religion, which makes it come with unspeakable power upon his hearers; that his choice of music, vocal and instrumental, on all occasions, may be in harmony with the Church's teaching; that the *rationale* of his teaching to his choir may make them perceive and know the meaning and power of the words they sing, and so deepen the impression made upon themselves and their hearers.

As to his education, he must begin with the piano and go from that to the organ (not *vice versa*). Good execution and *technique* at the piano will put a wide field of organ music within his grasp, bring him into sympathy with the greatest composers, and be an ever new source of delight and refresh-

ment. Duet playing is very improving for sight reading and steadying the time of the young player, also pianoforte trios and chamber music where possible. It is good for the mind and a useful accomplishment to acquire early the habit of committing music accurately to memory.

As an organ player, to be really artistic, he must be eclectic. The wider his scope of study the better, only he should make a stand against descending to the vulgar and trashy, while he is careful not to place himself out of tune with his audience by always flying over their heads. The attention of an audience must be awakened before they can be led to listen to thoughtful classical compositions. It requires dogged determination and hard work to master the difficulties of advanced organ music, and when this is done I submit that the chief benefit that will accrue to a good church musician will be not that he can at all times make a parade of personal display, but that the command he has acquired of the instrument makes him so free of trammels at the keys, that his attention can be fixed on the choir he is conducting with his accompaniments, hold them well in hand, and make the effect of what is being performed definite, prompt, and harmonious.

The "choirmaster-organist" must be the "conductor-accompanist," and must have in himself the instinct of the conductor as well as the sensitiveness of the accompanist. The power of starting a choir well together, initiating and maintaining the correct speed, is a rare and valuable quality. There are two essentials to attain this—one, intuitive perception of what the speed should be at first sight, which may be cultivated by careful observation; the other, hands that are not glued to the keys or feet to the pedals, but ready to mark the rhythm and accent of the music as occasion may require, care being taken not to mar that smoothness of effect which is a beautiful characteristic of organ tone.

His conductor's instinct and sense of time and rhythm will be developed by conducting orchestral services and oratorios. Here his acquaintance with cathedral scores will assist him; further, he must have some knowledge of instrumentation, and this branch of study must not be neglected. An incidental study in connection with this is transposition, which should constantly be put into practice.

If he can learn some orchestral instrument, so much the better, so as to get into the band, and have some experience of being "well conducted"; it will also quicken the sense of accuracy of pitch and intonation.

The more he knows of harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, form, acoustics, history, literature, the greater interest he will feel in the upper regions of the art, though, as he is drawn higher the summits above him yet to be scaled may

seem insurmountable—to some they may be. But what shall be denied to earnest work and ambition?

It is the contemplation of religious subjects that has brought out the greatest masterpieces of artists, and the greatest musical geniuses have, by their complete knowledge and control of musical ideas and forces, rendered high service to religion by their grand and immortal sacred works.

We come now to that which so many good players are deficient in, and are in consequence poor choir trainers—the art of singing. It is lamentable to go about and hear the wretched tone of men and boys, because there is no one to teach them how to open their mouths and use their voices. The plea that the material is bad will seldom hold good—the saddle should be put on the right horse. I have known the most admirable tone produced from the commonest ill-fed agricultural boys, and have in twenty years' experience as a teacher proved abundantly that the finest and most superb effects of vocalisation can be produced from common material, especially from London boys.

Of course there are difficulties, which a man who has made a study of voice production can get over with patience, such as cockneyism or provincialism. Incidentally, one may remark that unless the teacher's own English is above reproach, it is fatal to his ever attaining the best results from his pupils. A slight knowledge of Italian will assist the singing master in producing full round open vowels, and in forcing open those tightly closed English mouths and throats. To my mind the only possible style of singing is the old Italian, upon which I was brought up. I cannot see, however, why Englishmen, who have within them the nature and temperament of artists, should not be able to teach and learn singing as well as foreigners, if they are put on the right lines.

This review of the different demands that will be made upon a church musician is a formidable array, but those who desire to be complete artists must turn their attention to all these points. My deduction from this inference is, that it is a mistake to be too much engrossed in any particular study at first, as, for instance, theoretical study. When this is the case, the weightier matters, those qualities that will be required of a man in daily practical work, will be neglected.

It is essential to an artist to keep life, enthusiasm, and vitality about him; it is the secret of his power, and it is only by making his studies broad, varied, and interesting, that these qualities can be preserved alive in him, through all the fatiguing, deadening influence of daily drudgery in after life.

When one thinks of how short is life, and how long is art, how high, how great, one feels that it is only by exercising

the limited powers of ordinary mortals to the utmost that even an approximate mastery can be attained. The natural talent of one man is conspicuously greater than another, but every hard worker knows how far painstaking conscientious work is the secret of what is popularly taken for genius.

However plainly the church musician's hand is visible (metaphorically speaking) in the effect of the music, it takes its tone from, and is powerfully influenced by, the clergy. I feel (especially as our President is in holy orders) that I am now treading on delicate ground in speaking of the clergy. Their influence is so powerful, however, that it is impossible to avoid dealing with it in connection with our subject. We take it for granted that where good music is required, the clergy wish that the music should have free course, and do its beneficent work without let or hindrance. Here we come again to what underlies all—the spirit—the intention—the motive.

We all know how plainly the views and character of each parish priest or body of clergy may be perceived in the general tone of the services, and the attitude and demeanour of both choir and congregation, whether devotional or otherwise.

The organists, choirmasters, and choirs must feel that they have the clergy working with and for them (not against them), neither should they be oppressed or unduly domineered over, provided they are duly qualified for the posts they occupy.

Where there is sympathy everything is possible; without it no good results can be attained, because there can be no heart in the work. I am sorry to say that from time to time such reports do reach me, and I feel the pity of it.

For my own part, I do not like to see a clergyman, *as a rule*, interfering generally in musical matters. I feel that they are going out of their own province and trespassing upon ours. It is not their *raison d'être*, they cannot have had time for the special training we have received. It is best for each, as far as possible, to keep to his own line and his own proper work, both with the same high object in view, but harmoniously, mutually aiding and assisting one another.

If some of the younger clergy would only condescend to study the elements of singing, declamation, and elocution, and cultivate a sense of pitch, before they take upon themselves the most solemn public functions, it would be more in keeping with that spirit of reverence and humility which they preach, to say the least of it, instead of (which is far too commonly the case) being totally unprepared, and buying their experience at the expense of the congregation.

Discipline there must be, and any well-disposed artist will always bend a willing obedience to it—of course, *humanum*

est errare—and it is the clergyman's duty on all grounds to maintain an undisputed authority and control, which, if exercised with consideration and good feeling, is never felt to be tyrannical or unjust.

Again, here the genuine artist will assert himself, for in spite of the jealousies, heart burnings, and unworthy motives that may temporarily annoy or thwart him, his power will be recognised and command respect, the importance and influence of his ministrations will be felt to be invaluable.

To attain the highest ends the clergy and musicians must have in view a common object—not self-glorification, but the edification of the congregation, and even higher motives.

I once served under a vicar who was *supposed* to be unmusical, but soon after I had got the choir into shape, he said, "My dear Sergison, that anthem was worth ten sermons," and before he left the benefice on another occasion he said, "Why, my dear Sergison, that was worth forty sermons," and I quite agreed with him.

A church musician's life is not a bed of roses altogether, it is up hill work; but so long as he is going up hill it is well, he will get to the top some day.

Let us now turn to the choirs. One of the worst things they have to contend against is the wearisomeness of routine, which has such a deadening influence on the mind and heart. Cathedral choirs feel this most where antiquated, colourless services and anthems are in vogue. My own feeling is that it has a bad moral effect upon men and boys to have to sing through a service twice a day, Sundays included. I think it is too much for human nature. The men are paid to do it, and the boys are made to do it; but they have too much of it, and the inevitable result is a careless perfunctory performance, which makes the music that is performed fall altogether short of the effect it was intended to make. I am certain that once a day, on week days, is as often throughout the year as any set of men and boys can be expected to sing with spirit, interest, and good effect.

I believe that the system of double daily service mars its own objects by putting too great a strain on the performers, and that as long as it goes on, peculiar to England alone as it is, the same perfunctoriness and tameness will be felt and deplored. I always feel that whether it is a song or a service that is sung, or a piece that is played, unless it be done with the whole heart and soul it is better both for the performers and audience that it should not be done at all.

Life and interest is a special characteristic of the volunteer element, and if their enthusiastic service could be super-added and infused into the cathedral choirs it would be a great gain.

In forming large town parish choirs paid members are essential. The volunteers, however well intentioned, have a habit of being always otherwise engaged just when they are wanted, and there must be *four parts* that can be reckoned upon. The spirit of individual showing off should be discouraged in every one, and the higher motive always kept to the front. Leaders are always necessary for both men and boys that are earnest, ready, always watching, and on the spot. No one can estimate the value of a good, zealous hon. sec., who will work with the choirmaster, help him in countless details, writing letters, sorting music, seeing that everything is ready, and working up men to attend special services, and so on.

A supplementary rehearsal with a piano is often necessary for the whole choir, for correction and learning parts. It is a good plan for a clergyman to attend to assist in keeping order—of course, without interfering with the choirmaster.

The principal points which must be dwelt upon at rehearsal are the starts, pitch, rhythm, accentuation, time, phrasing, breathing, marks of expression, and distinct enunciation of syllables. Nothing should be left doubtful between the organist and the choir, so that all starts are made with precision. Care should be taken not to weary the choir by overtaxing them; often the salient points only can be touched upon at rehearsal. Their attention should never be allowed to flag for an instant, and conversation should be suppressed. The worst effects are produced by giving a choir *more* music to sing than they can rehearse, and more difficult than they can render properly. If a choir attempts what is beyond them it has bad effects in various ways—it makes them careless, it interferes with the devotion of those of the congregation who *know* what music ought to be, and, worst of all, it debases public taste by passing off upon a promiscuous audience flashy, imperfect performances for what is *reputed* to be fine singing. Aspirates and bad pronunciation should be constantly the burden of the choirmaster's song at rehearsal; his aim—firmness, decision, and point in performance.

So much depends upon personal influence; a man can either bind his choir to him or have no power with them at all. Let *ars celare artem* be the organist's watchword at the organ, and while it really guides the choir and congregation, the less it appears to do so the better; and never be obtrusive in accompaniment, while it should always be dramatic. Ripe experience and judgment even may err here, where the border-line between the sublime and the ridiculous is often so very narrow.

In agricultural districts girls have often to be utilised instead of boys, who are always "scaring crows," and have consequently very little voice! To go from small things to

great, on hearing the splendid effects of the female chorus at the Three Choir Festivals, how often one wishes that this material, which is so generally available (as Mr. Parratt suggested at the Wakefield Church Congress), could be more utilised for festival services. This brings us to the question of congregational singing. If the women (who are by far the most constant attendants), if those who sing were encouraged to attend choir rehearsals, so as to get a knowledge of the choirmaster's system of singing Psalms and hymns, they could assist in keeping the congregation generally with the choir, and, further, they could form a nucleus to reinforce the choir for a festival chorus. Congregational singing may be a distasteful subject to some musicians, but it is an integral part of the Church's system, and can be guided. With skill and care, not only very broad, grand effects can be produced in Psalm and hymn singing, but actual refinement and intelligence. When choirmaster, choir, and congregation understand one another, the whole mass can be made to go fast or slow, sing *fortissimo*, and suddenly hush, according to the sense and spirit of the words and the will and good sense of the organist, like one great choir. When this is attained, the congregation will be led up to appreciate the singing of the trained choir in the more elaborate portions of the service, and so realise the beauties of musical worship.

The training of boys is perhaps about the most important part of a choirmaster's work. I wish to mention a point in connection with choir schools. In days gone by the education, or neglect of education, of choristers by the cathedrals was a standing scandal, and there is a feeling abroad now that poor gentlemen's, particularly poor clergymen's sons, are the best to educate at a cheap rate at a choir school.

This is, to my mind, and especially in London, a fallacy and an injustice to the boys. People often say—"I don't see why boys of a superior class should not have better voices than those of a lower." I always say—"Neither do I, except that they haven't!" The gift of music and the construction of the vocal organs is not dependant upon birth or breeding, whether high or low, and my experience is that London middle and lower class boys afford a far finer *timbre* of tone, when well trained, than the poor pale delicate creatures who offer themselves from the country (often the sons of the poorest clergy) can ever approach to. Again, if you get a choir of gentlemen boys, they are supposed to go out into professions; by putting them into a choir school you are doing them an injustice, for the time that is taken up with daily services and practices, whether church or cathedral, leaves them, at fifteen or so, two or three years behind others of their own

age and position; they are, in fact, handicapped. If the school work, in addition to their choral duties, is made too hard, it is too much for the boys, and they lose heart all round. Whereas, if your boys are taken from a lower strata, you make them feel that a benefit is being conferred upon them, by giving them higher aims and objects, and by helping them to rise in life—then you gain their enthusiasm, which is so important. I speak not only from my own experience when I say that the best results have been attained by encouraging this class of boys, both while in the choir as choristers and in after life as men. The relative positions and authorities of the choirmaster and the master of the boys' school is often a vexed and vexing question. Here discord has the worst effect upon the whole choir. I know how organists have to suffer sometimes from this. If a schoolmaster is appointed who has no interest in the church music, only in the school, he will probably become jealous of the organist's power and influence, and put difficulties in his way, which has a bad effect upon the boys.

The greatest care should be taken in making these appointments. The man who has the greatest power in this world is the man who can make himself loved, and if a choir trainer can gain the affection and enthusiasm of his boys and men, while maintaining good discipline, he can do anything with them, they will work cordially with him.

I do not believe in corporal punishment in choirs, whatever may be done in the schools. I have had experience of lads of all sorts for many years, and have never failed to maintain perfect discipline, even under very difficult circumstances, and yet I never remember having struck or caned a boy in my life. If you once lose your temper, of course your influence is gone for good. Harmony must prevail, and, where it is possible, all discords must be resolved; rules must not be transgressed without correction, and all licenses fully justified. The pervading spirit should be love of the music, its object, and of the master.

It is disappointing to take boys too young, for their voices often go off, do not fulfil their promise, and they are so subject to childish illnesses.

I have no knowledge of the Tonic Sol-fa system, which doubtless has its merits; but the old staff notation is good enough for me.

I have said before in former papers on this and kindred subjects, that I believe the fault lies rather with the teachers than with the system. May I be allowed to quote as an instance of this branch of work, that the other day the younger boys in my choir, who have been taught on the old system, and who have many of them been less than a year with me, read through, with very few faults, the whole of

the very chromatic music of Spohr's "Last Judgment" at sight.

The teacher, to be successful, must be enthusiastic about his work, and while he makes boys feel that he is their friend, they must recognise in him their master. I believe the best way of maintaining order is by appealing to that sense of honour which we are proud to boast as a national characteristic. People say that boys' singing is not emotional; I have found it otherwise. I only know that my own feelings, as a boy, were as profound (perhaps more so) as they are now. Give boys credit for all you can, descend to their level, be painstaking and patient, and you will often be surprised with the result. Careful instruction in the elements of harmony, intervals, &c., must be persevered in; the teacher must always be explicit and careful to express himself so that they understand his meaning. I have found a small hand-book useful (Hiles's), and scales and exercises must be worked into the system of teaching.

Roughly speaking, boys should not be allowed to sing from their chests above C (third space). All false productions, nasal and throaty, &c., must be carefully reformed, slurring and affectation avoided, intervals taken clean, vowels properly pronounced, initial and final consonants distinctly enunciated, the meaning of the words and the dramatic effect of the music carefully pointed out and explained to them. Boys appreciate good, careful teaching, and one never knows how far it appeals to their better instincts, or encourages them to advance in the art in after life.

To keep them up to a high standard of excellence, boys should have at least to sing the Psalms, and have a practice once a day. The singing of the Psalms brings up the question of Gregorian and Anglican chanting. Personally I feel it to be a curious contradiction in terms, when I think of those who pride themselves on the *Catholic* character of their services, when they are so narrow in their views on this subject. The advocates of Gregorians only seem to prefer a rough and ready style of music, and refinement seems to be at a discount; hearty congregational singing is the professed object, and it must be conceded that for an uncultivated congregation unison singing is obviously the simplest and best. To harmonise Gregorians then appears to me to defeat this professed object, and to out-Herod Herod.

I do not concede, however, that Gregorian singing is the only possible method of getting hearty congregational effects.

The art and science of music, which has grown up and developed side by side with the Reformed Church in England, has left us a glorious heritage of chants, services, and anthems, strictly national, born and bred of the national

church, expressly written for, and well-suited to, its requirements, and I fancy that the main body of Anglican Churchmen prefer them. Where it is desired to have purely congregational singing, it is easy, from the enormous mass of chants, to select those, both single and double, which have *low* reciting notes, which meets one difficulty at least.

Time does not permit me to go fully into the discussion.

As a musician, when I listen occasionally to Gregorian Church Services, I am always struck by three grave faults. The first, owing to the frequent use of unbarred melodies in hymn tunes and chants; rhythm, time, and accents, the essentials of music, are unknown; and that the performance of communion services and anthems suffers in consequence to a painful extent. For instance, to hear an ordinary hymn tune sung as if it were an unbarred melody, in no time at all, is simply torture. Second, that the boys' voices are hard and unmusical. This may be owing to one of two causes, or both. The first, constant shouting upon the middle and lower registers of the voice render the upper notes shrill, hard, and flat. The second, the choir trainers commonly either ignore the elements of voice production, or have very imperfect musical perception. The third fault is one most extraordinary. How an educated clergy and a cultivated congregation can submit to the perpetual wholesale slaughter of the Queen's English under their noses, when care and reverence are supposed to be the watchword, passes my comprehension. I suppose people can get used to anything! I think it a mistake on all counts to have too constant changes of chant in the Psalms. The rendering of Anglican chants by a choir should be crisp and clear, care being taken not to jabber over the recitation parts of the verses, but to utter every syllable distinctly on the reciting note, and then to keep well together in strict time. By this means the congregation can be kept well in hand. Services are so lengthy and the strain upon the attention of a congregation so great, that it is desirable to avoid any unnecessary drawling. The nearer the Psalms and Versicles approach to ordinary careful reading pace the better.

I am confident there is no better system of pointing extant than the Cathedral Psalter, which is in such general use.

The Psalms are the poetry of the Church, and the more closely their varying moods are entered into and their meaning reinforced by the accompanist and choir within certain limits, the better.

A congregation perceives at once whether an organist is accompanying them in a careless, desultory way, or whether he enters into the spirit of the thing. On the one hand, he must avoid the danger of caricature, and of provoking ridicule; on the other, he should endeavour to make people

feel that his accompaniment fits—brings out the sense of the words.

An old Cathedral organist laid down these rules of thumb for his pupils for Psalm accompaniment. This is a fact:—

1.—Draw Great to Principal.

2.—Swell, 2 Reeds.

3.—Choir, soft stops.

4.—Play the first three verses on the Great, the next three on the swell, the next on the choir, and then *da capo*.

In hymn singing, which is so remarkable a feature of English church music, the most impressive effects may be made or marred by the perception, tact, and skill of the organist and choirmaster.

To produce fine congregational effects, rhythm, accent, and time must pervade the whole body. The power of initiating and maintaining these rests with the organist, who, if he has it in him, and has prepared his choir at rehearsal, can take the congregation with him who, as a rule, have the instinct.

It must never be lost sight of that every hymn has its own peculiarities and requires special treatment. For instance, the massive character of "O God, our help in ages past," and the flowing melody of "Pleasant are Thy courts above" in Hymns Ancient and Modern, must be sung at very different speeds and in a totally different manner.

I must beg leave to say again here what I have said before on this subject—viz., that if an intelligent rendering of hymns is to be given, and the phrasing which the sense of the words require brought out, that atrocious system of stopping at the end of each line must be given up. It is irritating and offensive to commonsense to the last degree, makes people sing the most utter nonsense, and prevents the uneducated from realising the force and meaning of the words.

The often quoted assertion that "Jesus lives no longer now," by a clergyman or choir, illustrates this, and countless passages can be cited.

To avoid this, a slight pause for breath can best be made, as a rule, at the end of every second line; but wherever there is no comma or stop at the end of a line where continuity is involved with the next, the choir must constantly be forbidden to take breath at the end of that line, but after any other word in it which commonsense dictates. If a long note occurs in the music at the end of such a line, an *accelerando* must be made so as to join the lines together and make sense, which the choir and congregation readily fall into.

A fault of punctuation, common in England, was once observed to me by an intelligent American—that we were in the habit of putting in a great many unnecessary commas.

This I frequently observe in hymns, tending to obscure the meaning, and is a point to which the attention of editors of any new hymnal or edition might be drawn with advantage.

The questions of breathing, phrasing, and various other details in singing more advanced music it is impossible to touch upon within the limits of this paper. One word in conclusion on the choice of music.

The Church of England choirmaster has a wide field to choose from, there is plenty of old and plenty of new, he can choose the best of each, neither should be neglected nor force the other out of the field; and if his selection tallies with and reinforces the Church's teaching in the service for the day, there is no more powerful means of conveying that teaching to the minds and hearts of the people.

He should be no less careful in his selection of organ music in voluntaries.

The charm of music is that it is so human and so divine, and is a link between the upper and lower creation. Where it is used in connection with the worship of the Creator of all it must call forth the highest emotions of men—on the principle that, what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. My plea is, that such high service requires high motives, high aims, and high cultivation: that the more complete the training of the man whose calling in life it is, the higher he will rise as an artist; and the higher his aims, the better service he will do to his country as a church musician.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN.—Ladies and Gentlemen, we have heard an extremely interesting paper and one which might furnish material for a very long discussion. I see around me many gentlemen who have had practical experience in the matters the lecturer has referred to, and I have no doubt we shall have an extremely interesting discussion. Before calling upon them I will say one word upon the observations in the latter part of the lecture, with regard to the difficulty of dealing with hymns, where a pause at the end of a line makes nonsense, which too often happens. It occasionally happens from hymns being written by persons who have no knowledge of music. In that very case which was mentioned, "Jesus lives no longer now," as generally sung with a pause at the end of the line, it involves distinct heresy. I mentioned the matter to Miss Cox and she informed me that when she translated it from the German she had not the faintest idea of its being adapted to music—she wrote it altogether from a

poetical point of view. I suggested to her a slight re-arrangement of the first two lines, which, at any rate, removed the heresy, and she has finally adopted that as the text which she wishes to be used for the future. I merely mention that to show that in some cases these hymns have been written without any idea of musical setting, and a hymn tune being a very hard and fast sort of music, it is not always easy to deal with it, so that the sense is conveyed as it ought to be.

Mr. C. E. STEPHENS.—All I have to say would be merely confirmatory of Mr. Sergison's very able discourse, and I really feel there is nothing left for me to add. I feel that he has hit a very proper chord in speaking about the limited views of some persons who are educated as organists, and who look on performance on the organ, and the daily service, anthems, and chants as almost the finality of art, whereas, as far as musical construction and power go, it is merely at the beginning. I am very pleased, however, to have observed of late years that our young organists have not contented themselves with being merely exponents of the secrets of the organ loft; but they have travelled, like our friend Dr. Bridge, into music that does not in the least betray that the author is an organist. That is just what one wants to see. There is a certain sort of music which cathedral organists of the last century wrote very largely, and which, at the best, deserves the name of very respectable music—it certainly is that. There is a class of music abroad well known by the name of "Kapellmeister Music"; it never travels beyond the appreciation of the Church, and never has any higher aim than that of just serving the purposes of the congregation during the lifetime of the man who wrote it. One never hears of it afterwards. But one can hardly wonder at it when one looks at it; it aims, at most, as I have said, at being respectable music. With regard to the training of choirs, I have had, in my experience as an organist, a good deal to do with that, and I have found, as Mr. Sergison has, that even the poorest boys in London—and when I was at St. Clement Dane's I had nothing but the parochial children there—are susceptible of being trained to produce a very high degree of effect, so far as it goes. It is not to be set down as material that you cannot train to useful and devotional purposes. But, as I said just now, I can really only corroborate what has been so well advanced by Mr. Sergison.

Mr. HERBERT.—I had charge for ten years of what was perhaps one of the best choirs in London, namely, the choir in Farm Street Church, and the experience I gained there was so large, that I think this assembly will not be sorry to hear some particulars of it. First of all I entirely agree with the lecturer that a conductor is absolutely necessary as well

as an organist to produce the full effect of the music. I do not believe an organist can conduct efficiently with the keys, and I, myself, have officiated as organist for years, both abroad and at home. At Farm Street my principle was absolute autocracy; implicit obedience of both singers and organist; the endeavour was to make every performance an individual one, to stamp the individuality of the conductor on each separate performance. My choir was not large—ten singers; six sopranos, three first and three second; two tenors, and two basses; but they were trained so perfectly after a few months that very few persons believed they were so small in number as they really were. As an Anglican, I opposed always the introduction of Gregorian music. I said then, as this gentleman has said to-night, that the Church of England has such a magnificent collection of music which has been the survival of the fittest, which has arisen out of its English literature, that the introduction of Gregorians was a mistake. Moreover, I thought then as an Anglican, and I think now as a Catholic, that Gregorians are best fitted for Latin, and that Anglican chants are best fitted for English. I have also opposed harmonised Gregorians. The harmony ought to come from the organist, and he ought to vary it to the best of his ability. Another thing I quite agree with is that the less the clergy meddle with the choir the better. There is another point which Mr. Sergison did not allude to—viz., deputies in choirs. I never allowed one. If a singer was unable to be present that singer forfeited the amount of the salary for that time. The consequence was that the performance was never injured by strangers coming in who knew nothing about the service. Rehearsals were equally obligatory with the performances, and equally strict. The organist was equally subject to the conductor with the singers. I may tell you we ventured on the Holy Week music, six-voice masses, Mendelssohn's eight-voice motetts, Hauptmann's eight-voice masses, Beethoven in C, all Hummel; we did not do much of Haydn and Mozart; I was against that, they were too long, the words were too often repeated, and I did not consider they were devotional. Although I had a great deal of opposition at first, yet after a couple of years I believe I may say I had the whole congregation with me.

REV. CHARLES MACKESON.—I read a paper some years ago on this very subject, though I dare say it has been long forgotten. There was one suggestion I ventured to make, and it was that English Church composers should consider the possibilities of English worship; that is, that instead of simply contenting themselves with the perpetual iteration of single and double chants and tunes and anthems of a certain sort, they should see whether our worship could not

develop something more like the Lutheran service of song which we get in the Passion music and the Christmas oratorios. I am sorry to say that that has never been done, but I should like to make the suggestion again. There has been a movement in that direction. It has come largely from those who have not been mentioned before to-day, but who, I venture to think, are deserving of a large amount of credit for the development of worship music—I mean our English Protestant Nonconformist brethren; because I fancy that Dr. Gauntlett and Dr. Allon did more for the development of grand congregational singing than any church organist or choirmaster or congregation it has ever been my lot to meet with. I think the same might be said of Mr. Binney at the Weigh House Chapel. They led the way in grand congregational effects and showed us how to do it. But since that time services of song have been very plentifully produced. There is a Cornish gentleman, Mr. Child, of Launceston, who has produced some services of song, and the Sunday School Institute is issuing a large number more. They are very meagre in their character, and to a musician their worth may be uncommonly little, but they seem to point to something which composers of eminence, of thought, and ability might do well to take in hand. If any of them will produce one I will give him an opportunity of hearing it sung by a congregation of one thousand people, and if Mr. Sergison will come up and listen to it, I will show him that all he desiderates can be accomplished. Last night it was my privilege, after the service was finished, to invite the congregation to sing Elvey's Christmas anthem—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come." You may say it is not very difficult, but, on the other hand, it is not very easy for a congregation, and they sung it, and produced what has been called broad congregational effect with a great amount of success. It seems to me that if that sort of thing could be developed and extended we might draw congregations by music, and as the statistics recently published show that not one church in twenty has more than half the number it ought to contain in it on Sunday, it is just worthy of consideration whether, after a generation of preaching more or less bad and more or less good, we should try a generation of musical effort. The Queen's Jubilee might fitly inaugurate an effort to do what we should do—make the people musical on the only day when we have the opportunity of getting the people together, that is, on Sundays.

Mr. HERBERT.—Might I add one word on another subject that has not been mentioned to-night? That is, the regret with which I have seen the increased quickness with which the Psalms are now sung in the English Church. I went into

a church in Dover some years ago, and they were singing that most glorious "London New"; I assure you it was something like a jig. I asked the organist afterwards, a very clever man, how it was, and he said: "Sir, I cannot help it, it is the spirit of the age." We all know that in the German chorales they go to the other extreme.

Mr. HOPPER.—We poor organists cannot help ourselves, we are obliged to play them at that rate because the clergy will have them so. It is quite a burlesque sometimes.

Mr. SOUTHGATE.—I hardly feel myself in accordance with what Mr. Sergison has said, and also Mr. Stephens, in regard to the quality of voice of the lower classes, or those just above them. My experience in choir training points to this—that you have very great difficulty in training boys of that stamp. You may take all possible pains with them in church in training them to pronounce their words properly, and to sing correctly, but it seems to me when they are away from the church (and you only get them about once a week) they go to their own homes, and there the old evils are still before them, and not very much good has been effected. I must confess that I much prefer to have the sons of those who live in a higher grade of life, with whom one does not have to labour so hard to get them to sing in a proper way.

The CHAIRMAN.—I shall just make one remark before I call on the lecturer to reply, with regard to the question of University degrees. The whole origin of these is exceedingly obscure, but I believe there is very little question that it was originally a branch of mathematics, and it was strictly from the mathematical point of view, the Pythagorean point of view, that music got into the Universities. Then, somewhere about the fifteenth century, it seems to have broken off a little from the purely mathematical point of view, and then the English Universities began to give degrees in it; but all those earlier degrees, I have satisfied myself, must be looked upon as purely honorary. There was no such thing as a musical education at the University, but when a man attained certain eminence as a cathedral organist or composer, he was decorated with the degree of Bachelor or Doctor. So it went on for some little time, until the seventeenth century, and it was then that the professorships were first established, and music, in the more modern sense of the word, became something like a side faculty, or began to stand on its own feet in a kind of way. But even then there was a great deal of humbug about it, for I firmly believe that to a large extent, even in modern times, the professor was simply a gentleman who received a certain fee; he looked over the exercise, as it was called, and recommended the gentleman who sent in the exercise to receive the degree, the fee being the principal part of the business. It was not, therefore,

until actually our own time that music, considered as an art, has been recognised by the Universities. There is another point—University degrees of all kinds are, to a very large extent, not practical, but theoretical. It is not quite accurate, I think, to say that a medical degree from a University is a practical one. Some Universities, no doubt, have a school of medicine, but the practical part of the education is given by the College of Physicians, or by private study. The University examines, and every University degree is merely the recognition of the attainment of a certain standard. I look upon the present movement in the Universities as of the highest possible value in this way, that before giving degrees in music they ought to insist upon a certain amount of qualification in arts. I think that is absolutely necessary, not only for the dignity of the degree, but also to place it on the same footing as the other faculties in which the art qualification is required before you proceed further. I will now call upon Mr. Sergison to reply.

MR. SERGISON.—I have to thank you very much for the kind way in which you have received my paper. There is one point in which, I am afraid, I have not made myself very clear. I did not wish to convey that the organist required a conductor; I meant to convey exactly the opposite—namely, that the organist was to acquire such power at the keys, and to have in himself that instinct of the conductor, that he would be able to hold the choir together just as well as if he were waving the stick. That is to be done by careful rehearsal and very careful preparation. As a case in point—I do not want to sound my own trumpet, but all I can say is that I have myself done this very often. For instance, Bach's "Matthew Passion," which is in eight parts, and has a most intricate organ accompaniment, which is so very independent of the voice parts, and there is very little connection with one another, that it is a very hard test for a choir to sing without a conductor; yet, many times at my own church with a choir of some sixty voices, we have done the "Matthew Passion" so sharply and so accurately—all those double choruses without a conductor—simply by taking pains at the rehearsal beforehand, that we have never had the slightest flaw or hitch. Therefore, I venture to say it is a power which can be cultivated, and it has this great benefit, that if the performance takes place in the chancel, it does away with any motion of the hand, or anything of that sort, which so distracts the devotion of the congregation. When the thing simply flows out, with nothing to attract the eye, it has a much better effect. I am sure I am thoroughly in sympathy with the gentleman who talked about congregational music and congregational anthems. I have heard often what has been done, and I often wish I had the oppor-

tunity of doing more myself in that direction. As for composers, I do hope our English composers now, who are coming to the front, will try to devote their attention to writing really good works for performance in church. As to the lower class of boys in London, I really have hardly the face to tell you, but I can only quote from what I have done myself. I could tell you a great deal that has been said to me by the very highest authorities on the effect produced by boys of quite a low stratum in London. I think the evil of their being constantly connected with low associations is, probably, to a certain extent, done away with by having a day school for the boys. It can often be managed without any great expense. That avoids their associating every day with low boys in school, which, of course, undoes the master's work. One other thing strikes me, which might be interesting to mention, about the question of musical degrees. One musician, whose name is very well known to all—the late Mr. Turle, of Westminster Abbey—I know as a fact always refused the honorary degree of the University, because he felt he had not been through the arts examination, and, therefore, he never would accept it.

(The votes of thanks were then passed to Mr. Sergison and the Chairman.)
