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ART. V.—THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLICAN SERVICE-MUSIC FROM THOMAS TALLIS TO SAMUEL SEBASTIAN WESLEY.

ANGLICAN Service-Music is a domain of art the limits of which are narrow, and strictly defined by law, usage, and tradition. Yet, by virtue of the national character of the Church, every great movement that our country has witnessed during the last three centuries, in the history both of religion and music, has borne its influence within those peaceful borders, and left there an abiding memorial. Hence the profound interest and indescribable charm with which our subject is invested.

In this technical sense a Service is "a collection of musical settings of the Canticles and other portions of the liturgy which are, by usage, allowed to be set to free composition."[1]

The liturgy authorized by the Act of Uniformity in the second year of Edward VI. contained (1) the "Venite," (2) the "Te Deum," (3) "Benedicite," (4) "Benedictus," (5) the "Nicene Creed," (6) "Sanctus," (7) "Gloria in Excelsis," (8) "Magnificat," (9) "Nunc Dimittis." The revised liturgy of 1552 contained (10) the "Kyrie Eleison," and the alternative Canticles, (11) "Jubilate," (12) "Cantate Domino," and (13) "Deus Misereatur." These are by usage the constituent parts of the fullest form of Service. Modern composers, it is true, are wont to set to music the "Offertory Sentences," and this is a legitimate addition to the Service. The "Gospel Doxologies," however, and the "Sursum Corda" have their ancient plainsong; so that these, like the "Preces" and "Responses," are excluded by the strict terms of the definition. Chants, too, no less than plainsong, are clearly distinguished from the free composition that is allowed in Service-music. The "Agnus Dei" and "Benedictus qui Venit" are also outside the limits; for, like the words of anthems, they are not in the liturgy, and, unlike anthems, they have no rubrical sanction.

Concerning the term "Service" in this technical sense, it is probable that the musicians of the Church, like the clergy, transposed the word to their special use. Praise, thanksgiving, and prayer are offered to God in the spirit of *service;* and when, after the Reformation, the distinctive names "Matins," "Vespers," and "Mass" fell into disuse, "Service," as a generic term, took their place. What more natural than that organist and choristers regarded certain musical compo-

[1] Dr. Stainer on "Service," in Grove's "Dictionary," vol. iii., p. 471.

sitions just as the clergy and congregation regard a Collect or a Lesson—that is to say, as a *part* of the Service? The technical use of the word followed as a matter of course. The several compositions, which are variable from service to service, yet always a considerable portion of the *whole*, were conveniently grouped in a set, and the aggregate was aptly termed "The Service."[1] And certainly the lofty considerations, which even the name of Service-music suggests, are by its nature consistently and powerfully enforced. The traditions of the cathedrals and the cloisters are, doubtless, in some respects, narrow and cramping; but, happily, there is one tradition, the noblest of all aud the strongest of all, which in each successive age demands that art, and learning, and genius shall make the Service-music, in solemnity, sublimity, and beauty, as worthy as mortal man can make it of the service of the Most High.

In defining our subject, we have referred to the legal enactments and changes that mark the era of the Reformation. It must not be supposed, however, that the origin of Anglican Service-music can be traced no higher than the sixteenth century. It is true that the reforming spirit of that age was powerfully at work within the province of our study, not only indirectly in effecting changes in the liturgy, but directly in modifying the style of ecclesiastical music. Yet the reformation of the Church's music, like the reformation of her liturgy, was strictly re-formation, not re-creation. When Tallis wrote his celebrated Service in D minor—or, more correctly, in an irregular Doric mode—his model was to hand in Marbecke's work of 1550, "The Booke of Common Praier noted," in which the famous Ambrosian "Te Deum" closely resembles what Meibomius, the learned antiquary, has given as the original setting of that ancient hymn.[2] Now, Marbecke's "Te Deum" is not a chant; for, though the melody is certainly simple, the theme is continually varied. Fairly, therefore, may we claim that in this arrangement of ancient ecclesiastical music, traceable well-nigh to the fourth century, we have the idea that survives and is embodied in the Anglican Service.[3]

I. Worthily does the honoured name of Tallis stand at the head of the roll. And first shall a tribute be paid to him in his character as a reformer of Church music.

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[1] The derivation of the term "Service" given above is more probable than the ingenious theory which gives it a secular origin, on the analogy of a dinner service or a service of trains. *Vide* Stainer's article on "Service," in Grove's "Dictionary of Music."

[2] The ancient melody is given by Meibomius in a treatise on ancient music published in Amsterdam, 1652. *Vide* Sir John Hawkins' "History of Music," vol. iv., pp. 224-227.

[3] Jebb on the "Choral Service," pp. 131, 132.

This trait is continually reappearing in the great composers. We shall see it again when we conclude our essay with a study of Sebastian Wesley, and we shall see it often in the intermediate years. The character is variously sustained, now by pruning, now by engrafting. The task is often wholly self-imposed; and this is well. Royal princes and cathedral dignitaries may command and advise, but his own judgment and taste are the true musician's safest guide. *Excelsior* must needs be his motto, if *Gloria in excelsis Deo* be his aim.

The work of Tallis was to prune. How needful was this process in the noisy, tuneless, complicated, unintelligible jargon that hitherto had passed for choral singing, we shall best understand by reference to two important contemporary records.

(i.) The first is the "Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum"—the report of the thirty-two Commissioners appointed under 27 Henry VIII., cap. 15. This document was first published in 1571, and, though void of legal authority, it expresses the mind of the wisest and ablest men of the time, and very heavy is its indictment of the prevalent abuse. "Partite voces et distincte pronuntient, et cantus sit illorum clarus et aptus, ut ad auditorum omnia sensum et intelligentiam proveniant; itaque vibratam illam et operosam musicam, quæ figurata dicitur, auferri placet, quæ sic in multitudinis auribus tumultuatur ut sæpe linguam non possit ipsam loquentem intelligere."[1]

(ii.) The second is the proposal mooted in 1562, in the Lower House of Convocation, "that organs and curious singing should be removed."[2]

These recommendations of the Commissioners and of Convocation are well interpreted by Erasmus, whose words have all the more weight with us when we consider his moderate temper, and remember that he had been a singing-boy in the cathedral of Utrecht. "There is," says he,[3] "a kind of music brought into Divine worship which hinders people from distinctly understanding a word that is said; nor have the singers any leisure to mind what they sing; nor can the vulgar hear anything but an empty sound, which strikes the ear but for an instant,[4] and hardly affords the least sensible delight.

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[1] Hawkins' "History," vol. iii., p. 460.

[2] Strype, cited in Burnet's "History of the Reformation," vol. iii., p. 304.

[3] Erasmus' "Commentary," 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

[4] "Mox peritura dilectatiuncula mulcet." For translations of this singular phrase, see Hawkins' "History," vol. iii., p. 60, and the Rev. W. Mason's essay on "Cathedral Music," p. xx, prefixed to his "Collection of Psalms and Anthems," 1782.

What notions have they of Christ, who think He is pleased with such a noise?"

Hence it came to pass that Tallis, a great expert in counterpoint, a supreme master of polyphony,[1] the famous composer of a song in forty parts,[2] wrote a Service void of all elaborate contrapuntal devices, and rigidly restricted both in the number of its harmonic combinations and in the flow and compass of its parts. Thus this father of English Church music made himself, in that department of the art which forms our study, the founder of a school which has aptly been called the EARLY SIMPLE HARMONIC.[3]

We have observed the self-imposed restrictions under which Tallis wrote his Service. May we not here anticipate the events of the next century, and say that, in writing such a Service, he wrote also the justest and severest condemnation of the fanatics who abolished the choral Service? Ignorant of this recent effort in the art that they spurned, they would not see that this great master had actually striven to make music the expression of that devout and reasonable worship which they rashly pretended that they alone either desired or understood.[4]

But no great school was ever founded on mere negation. Tallis, Farrant, Byrd, Patrick, and Bevin have positive characteristics very strongly marked, which are, chiefly, excellence and purity of harmony, simple sublimity, and a religious feeling that does not obtrude itself in scattered phrases, but pervades their whole compositions with expressive devotion. A striking and curious feature of Services of this class is the prevalence of the minor key, which is traceable, no doubt, to the ancient Dorian and Phrygian modes. This certainly gives an emotional quality to the music which is often inappropriate to the jubilant tone that pervades the Canticles; yet, on the other hand, it contributes much to the seriousness, dignity, and solemn grandeur so eminently characteristic of these ancient writers.[5]

It is usual to charge upon this school of composers defect in three particulars: melody, expression, and accent. In respect of melody, the charge is certainly true. To the matter

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[1] Contrast with Tallis' "Service" his anthems "Hear the Voice and Prayer" and "If ye love Me"; also the "Cantiones Sacræ."

[2] Edited by Dr. A. H. Mann, 1888, published by Weekes and Co., London.

[3] Dr. Stainer on "Service" in Grove's "Dictionary of Music," vol. iii., p. 471.

[4] Under Pope Marcellus, Palestrina wrought a similar change in the music of the Roman Catholic Church.

[5] Crotch's "Lectures on Music," chap. ii., on "Musical Expression."

of expression reference has already been made, and we need only add that anything more than the general expressiveness above described had scarcely as yet been attempted in music. Indeed, a century later Claudio Monteverde, the reputed founder of the opera, could venture a claim to be the first that ever attempted to express the livelier passions.[1] To support the third charge much might be said; and Dr. Burney has been able to cite both from Tallis and Byrd many instances of so-called defective accent.[2] Still, be it remembered that these composers did not write their music in bars, "the use of which," says Sir John Hawkins, "is not to be traced higher than 1574."[3] Adrian Batten (*circa* 1640), who composed a Service in the Doric mode, is said to have been the first to use bars in sacred music; and in secular music the same distinction is due to Henry Lawes. If, then, we insist on giving to the music of Tallis and Byrd that regularly-recurring accent which the use of bars suggests, we are rendering it in a manner that was certainly not contemplated by the composers, and it is hardly just to tax them with the barbarous effect that we produce.

II. But if Anglican Service-music had exhibited, in its earliest school of writers, all possible forms of excellence, how write of its development? Let us proceed, then, to study another class of writers, following closely, in point both of time and style, upon the former, and constituting what has been called the EARLY CONTRAPUNTAL SCHOOL, of which Orlando Gibbons is the noble exponent, and his Service in F the imperishable monument.

It will be gathered from the name of the new school that it undertook to revive an old style, against the excesses and obscurities of which there had existed a well-grounded objection. And none with less genius than Gibbons would have done well to disturb the silent dust. But his was indeed a life-giving spirit, and what the last generation had buried with scant honour he raised again in glory. This, however, he could hardly have done had he not been careful to profit by every advance that had been made in taste and science.[4] His Services, therefore, though more intricate than those of his immediate predecessors, are never unintelligible. He did not, like Tallis, eschew the more elaborate resources of counter-

[1] Preface to a set of madrigals published in 1638. "Ne havendo in tutte le compositioni de passati compositori potuto ritrovare esempio del concitato genere ma ben si del molle et temperato."

[2] Burney's "History of Music," vol. iii., p. 146, footnote.

[3] Hawkins' "History of Music," vol. iii., p. 518.

[4] See his "Fantasies of Three Parts for Viols," and his pieces for the virginals, in "Parthenia," both reprinted by the Musical Antiquarian Society.

point and fugue, but he was temperate in the use of them, and a consummate master of them. In the "Nunc Dimittis" of the Service in F, the "Gloria Patri" is a canon, two in one between alto and treble; yet, said Dr. Crotch with enthusiasm, "it possesses as much elegance and freedom in the melody of its parts as if not shackled by the rigid laws of this species of composition." The "Sanctus" is very fine, and the consecutive fifths[1] between the fourth and fifth bars show that a master can justify his freedom. Dr. Burney has detected a few false accents; but the innumerable ligatures between the bars[2] remind us of what has been already noted concerning the comparatively recent introduction of bars into musical score. Sweet melody abounds through the whole Service, and an exquisite gem is found in the "Magnificat" to the words "And holy is His Name." The modulation is always simple, and is sparingly used, and for this reason the Service in F is often quoted in illustration of Dr. Boyce's axiom that an artist's skill is best shown, not in departing from the original key, but by keeping within it, and developing the utmost variety of harmony of which it is capable. But the pre-eminent characteristic of Gibbons is solemn majesty, which marks alike his brightest and his more sombre passages. In order to justify the intricacy of some of the most elaborate portions, it is necessary, perhaps, to urge that the congregation is very familiar with the words of the Canticles, and can follow them more readily than the occasional conformist will easily believe; so that art discharges here a legitimate and useful function, in giving to this part of Divine service the freshness and impressiveness which else its frequent repetition might impair. At the same time, the principle may be boldly maintained that, because vastness and incomprehensibility are elements in the sublime,[3] therefore intricacy in music[4]—even such as, from the number and involution of the parts, borders upon the incomprehensible—powerfully conduces to make the art the noblest of all instruments both to arouse and express the awe and reverence that beseem us, when we contemplate and would fain adore the infinite majesty of God.

It will readily be understood that Gibbons was a master not easy to follow. But his influence was great. Childe, Lowe, and Creyghton may be reckoned of this school, and perhaps also Rogers and Aldrich.

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[1] For other harmonies "not generally received," see Burney's "History," vol. iii., p. 329, note (v.).

[2] In ten consecutive bars in the "Magnificat" there are no less than five such ligatures.

[3] Burke, "On the Sublime and Beautiful."

[4] Crotch's "Lectures on Music," chap. ii., on the three styles of music—the sublime, the beautiful, and the ornamental.

William Childe's works have much of the breadth of manner that marked Gibbons, and his Services in F and G exhibit the same art of combining brightness and joyousness with gravity and majesty. Both these Services are in major keys, and the mournful strain of the earlier school has ceased. The Service in E minor is varied and interesting in its modulation beyond this composer's wont. The sharp Service in D (for so a composition in the major was then called) displays in a characteristic manner Childe's flowing vein of melody, and is a fine specimen of the imitative style of writing, containing passages of the most intricate contrivance. This Service was a great favourite with Charles I. Childe was organist at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and, suffering much in his royal master's cause, exhibited throughout a chequered life singular serenity, patience and goodwill.

Lowe is best known by his anthems, and by his "Short Direction for the Performance of Cathedrall Service," a work much needed after fifteen years' suppression of the liturgy, and happily accomplished ere disuse became oblivion.

We cannot, of course, enter in any detail into the tragic history of those eventful years, nor follow Music to her one forlorn refuge in the city of Oxford. Yet let us remember a truth to which John Milton is the great witness. Sacred music could never have come to such high perfection in England but for that spirit of religious earnestness of which there were noble examples on both sides in that momentous struggle. The words that, in the whole range of English literature, are the loftiest praise of cathedral music were penned by the great poet whose intellectual convictions and moral judgment ranked him with the Puritans:

> But let my due feet never fail
> To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
> And love the high-embowèd roof,
> And antique pillars, massy-proof,
> And storied windows, richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light:
> There let the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced quire below,
> In service high and anthem clear,
> As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
> Dissolve me into ecstasies,
> And bring all heaven before mine eyes.[1]

But to Oxford, after the wars, our studies summon us, where Benjamin Rogers was for more than twenty years the organist at Magdalen College, and Henry Aldrich, that ardent lover and generous patron of music, was Dean of Christ Church.

Aldrich wrote a Service in G on the model of Gibbons, and

[1] Milton's "Il Penseroso."

another in E minor, and his Service in A has often been admired for the tasteful expression of the verse parts, which, as distinguished from the parts rendered by the full chorus, were now being developed as a regular feature of the Service.

Rogers, who wrote in a style of grave and sweet simplicity, composed Services in D, E, F, and A, which are all printed in one or other of the various collections; and an evening Service in G is in manuscript in Ely Cathedral. But not in this writer are the characteristics of the school very strongly marked, and we pass on to mention Dr. Robert Creyghton. At the Restoration he was just come to man's estate, and lived a long and peaceful life, spending many years in the lovely precincts of Wells Cathedral, where he was Canon and Precentor. Following in the steps of the master, who, dying in his prime,[1] had been taken from the evil to come, this reverend amateur, happily guided by good judgment and taste, succeeded in "introducing more sprightly phrases into Church music,"[2] as the two Services in E flat and B flat will show. He also used frequently the triple measure, finding, no doubt, that he attained thereby a smoothness and grace well proved by Gibbons in former days, as afterwards by Purcell, to be perfectly compatible with grave and solemn majesty.[3]

ATHERTON KNOWLES.

(To be continued.)

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[1] Gibbons died in 1625, aged forty-two.

[2] W. Alexander Barrett's "English Church Composers."

[3] Gibbons' Easter anthem—the movement "Who by His death hath destroyed death"; Purcell's anthem "Thy way, O God, is holy."