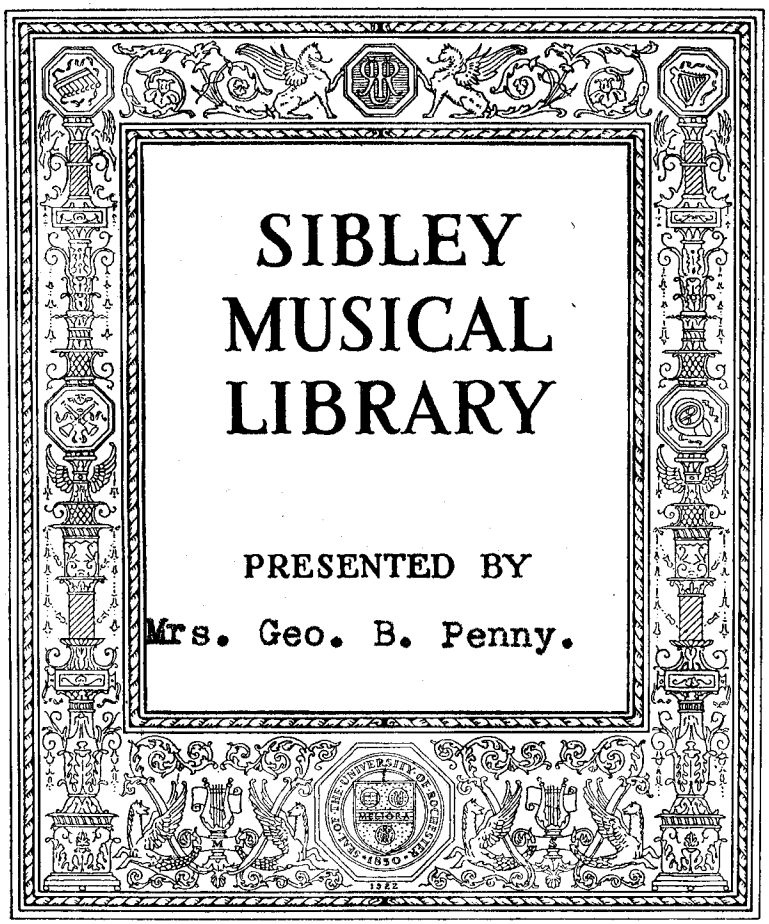
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER LIBRARIES
3 9087 00866167 2

A HISTORY OF MUSIC

BY

W. S. ROCKSTRO

2/-


SIBLEY
MUSICAL
LIBRARY
PRESENTED BY
Mrs. Geo. B. Penny.
SEAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
MELIORA
1850
1882

Private Library
OF
GEORGE BARLOW PENNY,
LAWRENCE, KANSAS.

No.----------

The historical development of music, as Felix (Mendelssohn) pourtrayed it, was especially interesting; for, who can understand anything who does not enter far enough into it to know its history?"—*Goethe's Letter to Zelter*, June 3, 1830.

A

HISTORY OF MUSIC

FOR THE

Use of Young Students.

BY

W. S. ROCKSTRO.

THIRD EDITION.

WITH IMPORTANT ADDITIONS.

LONDON:

ROBERT COCKS & CO., 6, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, W.

Publishers to the Queen and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

On the Music of the Antients 7

CHAPTER II.

On the Invention of Counterpoint 11

CHAPTER III.

On the Invention of the Time-Table 15

CHAPTER IV.

On the Ecclesiastical Music of the Middle Ages .. 18

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the Madrigal 22

CHAPTER VI.

Concerning the "School of Palestrina" 24

CHAPTER VII.

Concerning the Hymnody of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries 28

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Rise of the Modern School of Music 32

CHAPTER IX.

The Cantata 35

CHAPTER X.

On the Invention and Development of the Opera .. 37

CHAPTER XI. PAGE

On the Invention and Development of the Oratorio 44

CHAPTER XII.

On the Rise and Progress of Instrumental Music .. 51

CHAPTER XIII.

On the Great Masters of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 57

CHAPTER XIV.

On the Great Masters of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries 70

CHAPTER XV.

On the Later Masters of the Nineteenth Century 74

CHAPTER XVI.

On the Composers and Virtuosi of the Present Day 83

CHAPTER XVII.

Concerning "The Music of the Future"..... 87

Questions for Examination..... 91

Index and Chronological Table 101

INTRODUCTION.

WITHOUT some knowledge of the History of Music we can neither learn to estimate the merits of the Great Masters at their true value, nor enter fully into their spirit. We may, indeed, attain the power of singing or playing almost any composition which may happen to be set before us, with more or less mechanical correctness, and even with a certain amount of expression: but we shall never succeed in distinguishing the style of one great Composer from that adopted by another; nor can we hope to interpret the characteristics of any given style with the least approach to certainty. The difficulties bequeathed to us by some of the older Instrumentalists seem quite inexplicable, until we are told, that, before the age of John Sebastian Bach, Harpsichord-players were almost unanimous in entirely discarding the use of the thumb. Until we know that Handel never, by any chance, used the Chord of $\begin{smallmatrix}6\\4\\3\end{smallmatrix}$, we have no means of distinguishing a faithful arrangement of *The Messiah* from a spurious one. In cases like these, a little knowledge of History helps us immensely. Unfortunately, most works upon this subject are too voluminous—and, perhaps, a little too erudite—for general use. Dr. Burney's learned treatise, in four thick quarto volumes, and that of Sir John Hawkins, in five, are invaluable to the advanced student, but much too elaborate and complicated for the beginner;

and the number of fairly comprehensive Histories, of more modest dimensions, is exceedingly small. We believe, therefore, that, in giving the following pages to the public, we are meeting a real necessity, and doing our best to help young aspirants to the acquisition of an amount of knowledge which cannot but be most useful to them at the outset of their career. Without pretending to exhaust so important a subject in the course of a few short chapters, we trust that our labours may at least assist in giving a sufficiently comprehensive view of it to remove preliminary difficulties, and set really earnest enquirers on the right track; and, should we succeed in accomplishing this, the purpose of our little work will be more than answered.

It is hoped that the "Questions for Examination" with which the treatise concludes will be equally acceptable to those engaged in public and in private tuition, and that the dates supplied in the Index and Chronological Table will save much labour in the way of reference. Facility of reference is, indeed, so important a requisite, in books intended for educational purposes, that, in the hope of increasing it, we have endeavoured to catch the reader's eye, by printing the names of all works quoted as examples in Italics, and, by beginning all technical terms—such as Chord, Scale, Violin, &c.—with a capital letter.

ELM COURT, BABBICOMBE,
TORQUAY, 1879.

A HISTORY OF MUSIC.

CHAPTER I.

On the Music of the Antients.

The oldest musical system of which any authentic records now remain to us is that adopted by the Greeks, who, in all probability, imported it, in the first instance, from Ægypt.

That this system is based, to a certain extent, upon pure mathematical truth, is indisputable: but, modern critics differ so widely in their interpretation of the expressions used by antient authors, that it is difficult, in the face of conflicting opinions, to arrive at a clear understanding even of its first principles. To attempt, in the present state of our knowledge, to reconcile the theories of rival commentators would be mere waste of time. But, happily, the bearing of this part of our subject upon the progress of modern Art is of so little real importance, that it may safely be referred rather to the domain of the Antiquary than to that of the practical Musician, who will lose little by neglecting to study the works of Ptolemy, Euclid, Aristides Quintilianus, and other teachers of a dead, if not forgotten past.

The History of Music, as a living Art, begins at a period coæval with the first introduction of Christianity into Western Europe.

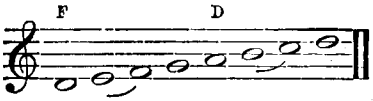
Following the example of the Ægyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and, notably, that of the Jews, the early Christians

cultivated the practice of Vocal Music with extraordinary enthusiasm. It formed so important a part of their Religious Ceremonial, that it was regarded by the heathen as an ever present characteristic of the newly-promulgated Faith. Thus, Pliny the Younger, in his accusation against the Christians, complains that they not only neglected to sacrifice, but "held meetings before daybreak to sing praises to Christ, as to a God." Of the melodies to which these praises were sung no written record has been preserved: yet we are not left altogether in the dark as to their nature. There seems to be little doubt that the earlier Disciples brought with them, from Judæa, the Music to which they had been accustomed to sing the Psalms of David in their own Temple at Jerusalem; and, from certain expressions used by more than one antient writer, we are led to infer that this Music was always sung antiphonally—that is to say, by two alternate Choirs. A careful analysis of the Psalms themselves leads to the inevitable conviction that they were originally intended to be so sung; and, though the assertion cannot be actually proved, there is strong reason for believing that much of what we now call "Gregorian Music" has been handed down to us by tradition from these early ages, and that some of it, at least, is founded upon, if not identical with, the Music to which the Psalms were originally composed.

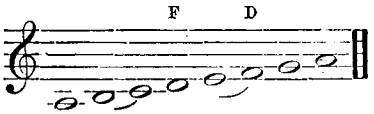
The grand distinction between this venerable Music, and that of later date, lies in the peculiarity of the Scales—or, rather, Modes—in which it is written. We now employ two Modes only—the Major and the Minor. In early times four were in constant use. Before very long, the number was increased, first, to eight, and, eventually, to twelve. Each Mode was characterised, like the Major and Minor of our own day, by the position of its Semitones. In the following Table, the place of these Semitones is indicated by a slur; while the Final—or, as we should now call it, the Key-note—is distinguished by the letter F, and the Dominant, or Ruling-note, by the letter D.

AUTHENTIC MODES. PLAGAL MODES.

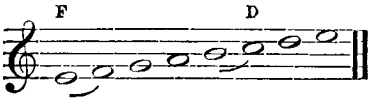
MODE I. (The Dorian Mode.)



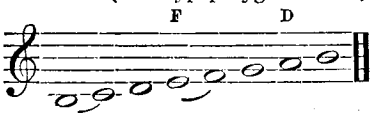
MODE II. (The Hypodorian Mode.)



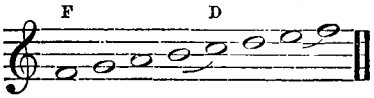
MODE III. (The Phrygian Mode.)



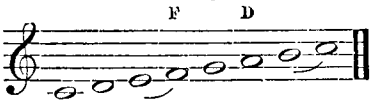
MODE IV. (The Hypophrygian Mode.)



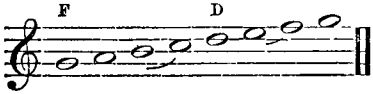
MODE V. (The Lydian Mode.)



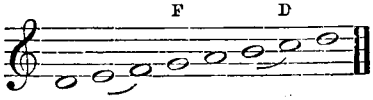
MODE VI. (The Hypolydian Mode.)



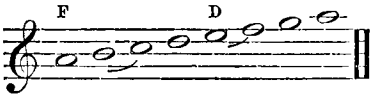
MODE VII. (The Mixolydian Mode.)



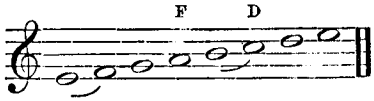
MODE VIII. (The Hypomixolydian Mode.)



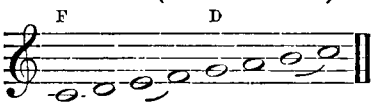
MODE IX. (The Æolian Mode.)



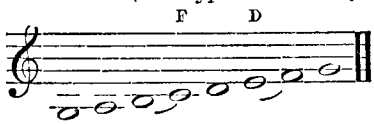
MODE X. (The Hypoæolian Mode.)



*MODE XIII. (The Ionian Mode.)



*MODE XIV. (The Hypoionian Mode.)



Of these Scales, Nos. I, III, V, and VII,—now called the Authentic Modes—were first brought into systematic use, by S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in the latter half of the Fourth Century.

---

* It will be seen, that, though we have spoken of twelve modes only, the two last are here numbered XIII, and XIV. The reason of this is, that numbers XI, and XII, though admitted in theory, were never brought into practical use. For more information on this interesting subject, the reader may consult the article, "MODES, THE ECCLESIASTICAL," in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians."

The Plagal Modes—Nos. II, IV, VI, and VIII—are believed to have been first introduced, some two centuries later, by S. Gregory the Great, who collected together all the best Melodies in general use, and did so much for the advancement of Church Music, that, in its oldest form—the *Cantus planus* of Ecclesiastical Historians—it is called "Gregorian Music" to this day: a "Gregorian Tone" being, in fact, nothing more than an exceedingly simple Tone for the Psalms, of great antiquity, written in one or other of the first eight Modes, and therefore named "First," "Second," or "Third Tone," as the case may be. Modes IX, X, XIII, and XIV, were not brought into general use until the reign of the Emperor Charlemagne: and, even then, the Psalms were never sung to them; though they were constantly employed for Hymns, and other longer pieces of music.

The use of the Modes was, however, by no means confined to Ecclesiastical Music alone. Many of the finest English, French, Scottish, Irish, and other National Melodies, are written in these antient Scales, and derive their peculiar character from the peculiar position of the Semitones. Strange to say, though the beauty of these delightful airs is admitted by all, nothing whatever is known, or ever seems to have been known, concerning their authorship. Some of them are, no doubt, of extreme antiquity. Folk-songs in every sense of the word, they originated among, and were sung by the People, on every possible occasion, at festive gatherings, and in the privacy of the home circle, until they became an all-important element in the popular life, and a powerful means of preserving national characteristics unchanged through a long succession of years. In the time of the Crusades they were reinforced, rather than supplanted, by the Songs of the Troubadours and Minnesingers, who, everywhere, gave their best energies to the cultivation of Music and Poetry, and were everywhere received with favour. Wandering from province to province, these pioneers of Art carried their gentle craft to the remotest confines of Christendom; and, by forming themselves into Guilds and Confraternities, (not unfrequently supported

by Monarchs, and Nobles whose will was absolute,) were enabled to exercise an influence upon civilization scarcely less important than that wrought by the laws of Chivalry itself—which laws, indeed, the Minstrels not only studied diligently, but most assiduously promulgated, in their Songs and Romances, as the accepted standard of all that was good and beautiful in daily life.

Thus then, side by side with the Music of the Church, and, in outward structure, closely related to it, we find, in the Middle Ages, a system of Sæcular Music, flourishing no less luxuriantly than our own modern Schools, and taking such mighty hold upon the inmost hearts of the People, that, to this day, its characteristics may be traced in the Folk-songs of more than one great European nation.

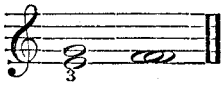
Slowly, but surely, these two systems—the Ecclesiastical and the Sæcular—were preparing the way for the noblest creations of a later phase of Art: but, they lacked one thing, without which no really important step could be taken in the right direction. Both styles were essentially unisonous. As yet, no Composer seems to have contemplated the possibility of writing either in vocal or instrumental Harmony. And, so long as Harmony remained undiscovered, no farther advance was practicable.

CHAPTER II.

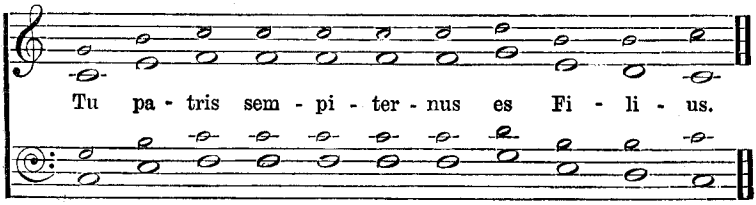
On the Invention of Counterpoint.

The earliest attempts at what we now call Harmony were, as might naturally have been expected, of the rudest possible description; and owed their origin, in all probability, rather to accidental discovery, than to the deliberate application of scientific principles. The harmonic interval which first attracted the attention of practical Musicians seems to have been the Minor Third; which, certainly as early as the Ninth Century, was very generally

used as an accompaniment to the last note but one of a descending Melody.



Thus employed, the newly-invented progression was considered admissible at the end of a Melody, only. But, no long time elapsed before the harmonic properties of the Fourth, the Fifth, and the Octave, obtained universal recognition:* and these and other intervals were used throughout the entire strain, though, in a way which, to modern ears, would be simply intolerable; as may be seen from the following example, in which the Melody is printed in large notes, and the added Harmony in small ones:—



An Accompanying Harmony, constructed upon this principle, was called *Diaphonia*, or *Organum;* and the Choristers who sang it were described as *Organizers:* whence some have inferred that the added notes were really intended to be played upon the Organ. This idea, however, is erroneous. There is, indeed, reason to believe that the Organ was introduced into the Services of the Church as early as the year 660: but it is certain that the so-called *Organum* was intended to be sung without any accompaniment whatever—though it is not impossible that the facility with which two or more notes could be played simultaneously upon the Organ may have led to the adoption of the new mode of singing, or, at least, have suggested its name.

Hugotio di Vercelli, Bishop of Ferrara—a writer of some celebrity, who flourished during the latter half of the Twelfth Century—calls the practice of singing in two parts *Discantus;*

* For a description of the properties of these intervals, see "Practical Harmony; a Manual for Young Students, by W. S. Rockstro." (Cocks & Co.)

a term which literally signifies "Doubled Song;" that is, a species of Song sung by two distinct Voices. Hugotio died in the year 1212; before which time the art of singing in Discant had been improved by the introduction of many salutary rules, though it still permitted the use of progressions which have since been condemned as utterly barbarous.

The word "Counterpoint" (*Contrapunctus*) is of later date, and is derived from the practice of writing the points, by which musical sounds were antiently represented, counter to, or, as we should now say, over, or against, one another. We first meet with it in the writings of the celebrated Gerson, Chancellor of Notre Dame, about the year 1408. In most respects, the Counterpoint of Gerson's age was exactly similar to the Discant described by Hugotio di Vercelli. The term, *Contrapunctus*, was, however, applied exclusively to written music; whereas *Diaphonia, Discant*, and *Organum*, were always sung extempore.

Our knowledge of these facts is derived from certain valuable MSS, and rare printed books, preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the British Museum, and some of the most celebrated Libraries on the Continent. By far the most famous treatise ever written on the subject is that of the learned Boëthius, who flourished between the years 476 and 525. Unfortunately, this work, though once regarded as an indispensable text-book, is too abstruse and unpractical to render any real assistance to the modern student. The earliest writer who gives us any clear idea of the state of Music in the Middle Ages is a Monk named Hucbaldus, of St. Amand, in Flanders, whose rules for composing such an *Organum* as was customarily sung in the Ninth Century are by no means difficult to understand. We also owe much to the writings of S. Odo of Cluni, Remi of Auxerre, Notkerus, and others; but, most of all, to those of Guido d'Arezzo, a learned Benedictine, whose *Micrologus*, written about the year 1024, is, perhaps, the most valuable dissertation on the subject now remaining to us. Guido is generally believed to have invented both the Gamut, and the Lines of the Stave; but he is best known

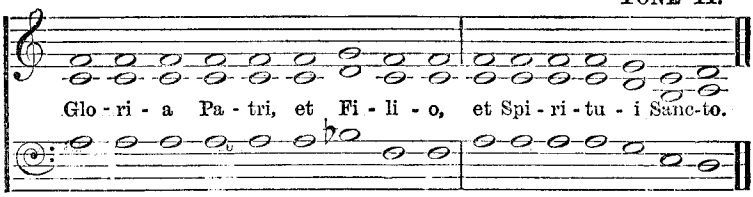
as the author of certain important improvements in Solmisation, founded upon the use of the syllables: *Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La*—the leading syllables of a celebrated Hymn, sung on the Festival of S. John the Baptist:—

UT *queant laxis* REsonare *fibris,*
MIra *gestorum* FAmuli *tuorum*
SOLve *polluti* LAbii *reatum,*
Sancte Joannes.

These six syllables were reiterated, according to the system of Guido, upon certain successions of notes, called Hexachords; and tended, in no small degree, to bring the Scale into a purer form than any in which it had previously appeared. The syllable, *Si,* was not introduced until many centuries later.*

We are also indebted to Guido for much valuable information concerning the progress of *Organum* and *Discantus.* In the absence of these powerful auxiliaries, no Church Music was considered complete; and no very long time elapsed before they reached a high stage of development, in a form of composition, called, in France, *Faux-bourdon,* in Italy, *Falso-bordone,* and, in England, *Fa-burden.*† This was of two kinds. In one, the Melody was sung with a Drone-Bass: while, in the other, it was accompanied, except in its last note, entirely by Thirds and Sixths:—

TONE II.



A careful distinction must, however, be made between the *Faux-bourdons* of the Middle Ages and those composed at a later

* For more detailed information on this subject see the article, HEXACHORD, in "A Dictionary of Music and Musicians," edited by G. Grove.

† From the French, *bourdon,* a drone.

period. In the Sixteenth Century, any slow Psalm Tone was called a *Faux-bourdon*, provided it was written entirely—or even chiefly—in the First Order of Counterpoint. But, long before that time, the rugged harmonies of the antient *Organum* had given place to progressions of a very different character.

CHAPTER III.

On the Invention of the Time-Table.

The writings of Guido d'Arezzo exercised a most beneficial effect upon the progress of Art, which, before the close of the century in which he lived, made a rapid advance towards the perfection it was destined ultimately to attain.

Ecclesiastical Melodies were originally written, throughout, in notes of equal length; and the Discant with which they were embellished was, almost of necessity, moulded in the same monotonous form. But, by degrees, Musicians learned to appreciate, at its true value, the agreeable effect produced by notes of unequal duration. Hence arose a new species of Song, called "Figured Music," (*Cantus Figuratus*,) in accompanying which the First Order of Counterpoint—"Note against Note"—was naturally abandoned in favour of that now known as the Second Order, wherein two notes are sung, in one part, against one in another.

This improvement in style rendered a still farther advance imperatively necessary.

No system of Notation in use, before the middle of the Eleventh Century, professed to indicate anything more than the relative pitch of the notes intended to be sung. But it was evident, that, if several Voices were to sing together, in notes of unequal length, some provision must be made for determining the exact duration of every note employed. Such a provision was actually instituted,

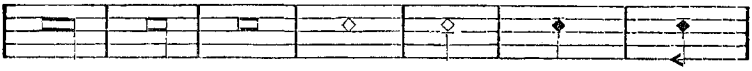
by the formation of the Time-Table; of which we find the first trace in a treatise on "Measured Music," (*Cantus Mensurabilis*), written, by Franco of Cologne, about the year 1060.

Franco describes four species of notes only: (1) the Large—or, as he himself calls it, the "Double Long"—(2) the Long, (3) the Breve, and (4) the Semibreve.

Double Long (or Large). Long. Breve. Semibreve.

All these notes, with their corresponding rests, and with the important addition of the Minim, were also figured, by Franchinus Gafurius, in one of the first works on Music ever issued from the press—a dissertation, called *Practica Musicæ*, printed, at Milan, in 1496. Gafurius considers no more than five kinds of notes essential; but the number was increased, at a very early period, to seven, by the invention of the Greater Semi-minim, (or Crotchet), and the Lesser Semi-minim,* (or Quaver); and, after the invention of printing, the black forms were generally discarded in favour of open white characters, with square, or lozenge-shaped heads.

Large. Long. Breve. Semibreve. Minim. Greater Semi-minim. Lesser Semi-minim.



Between the time of Franco, and Gafurius, we find the subject of Measured Music more or less elaborately treated, by Walter Odington, a Benedictine monk of Evesham, in Worcestershire, who flourished about the year 1240; Robert de Handlo, another Englishman, who wrote in 1326; Marchetto da Padova, whose earliest work is dated 1274; and, notably, Joannes de Muris, a learned Doctor of the Sorbonne, who has left us a rich collection of writings produced during the first half of the Fourteenth Century.

From rules laid down by these, and other contemporary authors,

* In later times, the Quaver was sometimes called *Croma*, or *Fusa*, and the Semiquaver, *Semicroma*, or *Semifusa*.

we learn that the Large, the Long, the Breve, and the Semibreve, were each equal, when Perfect, to three notes of the next lesser denomination; and, when Imperfect, to two, only: notes shorter than the Semibreve being always Imperfect This idea of Perfection—said to have been first suggested in honour of the Holy Trinity—was afterwards extended to certain kinds of Rhythm, (called Mode, Time, and Prolation,) which, when Perfect, corresponded with the Triple Time of modern Music, and, when Imperfect, with our Common Time. The sign of Perfection, in these cases, was either the figure 3, or a Circle—the most perfect of figures—placed at the beginning of the Stave. The sign of Imperfection was the Semicircle. Examples of the Circle are rarely found in printed music of later date than the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. The other two signs still remain in use; Simple Triple Time being always indicated by means of the figure 3, and Simple Common Time by the Semicircle—which, however, is constantly, though very erroneously, supposed to represent the letter C.

Until the close of the Sixteenth Century, bars were only used to indicate convenient places for taking breath. Antient Measured Music, instead of being divided, like ours, into equal portions, by lines drawn through the Stave, was written continously from beginning to end. Nevertheless, time was as strictly observed, and its beats as carefully counted, as in the music of the present day.

These improvements in Rhythm naturally inaugurated a far higher phase of artistic development than any that had been previously witnessed. At the same time, they seem to have encouraged a certain amount of extravagance: for, in 1322, we find Pope John XXII. issuing a Bull for the purpose of restraining the Musicians of his day from corrupting the antient Melodies of the Church by the introduction of unseemly ornaments. But, this well-known decree, though it checked undue frivolity, in no wise tended to retard the advance of legitimate improvement either in the Art or the Science of Music.

CHAPTER IV.

On the Ecclesiastical Music of the Middle Ages.

It was manifestly impossible, that, with a Gamut, a Time-Table, a convenient form of Notation, and a system of Counterpoint, all ready to hand, Musicians should rest satisfied with the meagre *Organum,* and monotonous *Faux-Bourdons,* bequeathed to them by Guido, and his immediate successors. We have, indeed, abundant evidence of their desire for better things. Their progress was necessarily slow: but it is certain that they were wanting neither in industry nor enthusiasm; for, even as early as the latter half of the Fourteenth Century, they proved themselves capable of producing works, which, compared with those of the preceding period, may justly be regarded as miracles of skill and learning.

It is generally believed that the art of Composition—as distinguished from that of mere mechanical part-writing—was first cultivated in Flanders.

By the term, "Composition," we mean that style of writing in which a given Subject is made to serve as the basis of a more or less elaborate work, constructed in regular form, and having a dennite end in view. The definition holds good, whether the Subject selected be an original Melody, or that of a Psalm, or Hymn, or even of a sæcular Romance. In either case, the composition itself is held to be original, provided it is artistically constructed, and moulded into an original form. As a general rule, the old Composers preferred rather to treat fragments of well-known Church Tunes, or favourite popular Airs, than to invent new Subjects for themselves. Upon these simple themes they founded

their Fugues and Canons; frequently weaving them into devices of the most ingenious and complicated description: and their works were then named after the Subjects they embellished. Hence, we constantly meet with Masses bearing such titles as *Missa "Veni Creator," Missa "Te Deum laudamus,"* or *Missa "Æterna Christi Munera;"* and, more frequently still, with *Missa "L'homme armé,"*—*"L'homme armé"* being the name of an old French ditty, upon the Melody of which scarcely any mediæval Composer of any celebrity has neglected to exercise his ingenuity.

Innumerable productions, such as we have here described,—chiefly Masses, Motets, and other pieces of Ecclesiastical Music—dating from the closing years of the Fourteenth, or beginning of the Fifteenth Century, have been handed down to us, in manuscript: and—with one curious exception, a sæcular composition, to be hereafter noticed—they are almost all the work of Flemish writers. It is true that a large proportion of these works first saw the light in Rome, to which city their authors repaired, in the hope of being engaged either to sing in, or compose for, the Pontifical Chapel; but it is equally true that the Art to which they owed their existence was carried to Italy, from Flanders, by men who hoped to obtain, in a foreign country, greater encouragement than their own was able to afford.

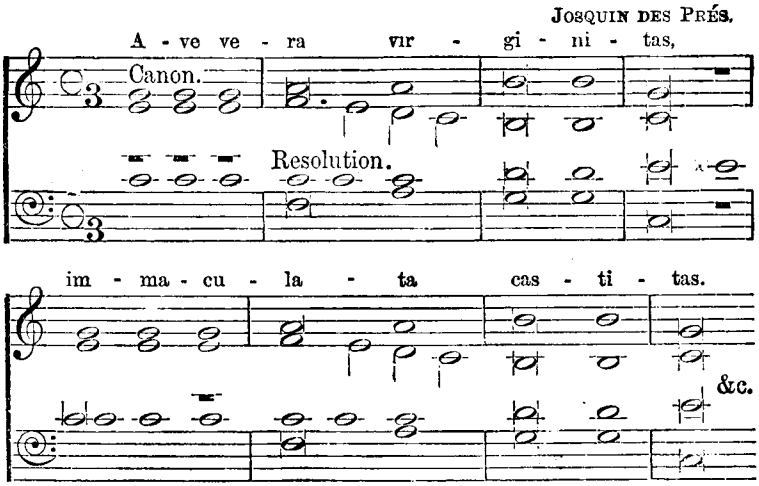
Foremost among these voluntary exiles was Guglielmo Dufay, who was a member of the Papal Choir for fifty-two years—from 1380 to 1432. His works, some of which are still preserved in the library of the Sistine Chapel, would sound dry and uninteresting enough to most modern ears; yet they show an earnestness of purpose which contrasts not unfavourably with writings of a later date—even with those of one of the greatest of his successors, Giovanni Okenheim, (or Ockegem), who was also a member of the Pontifical Choir, and flourished between the years 1430 and 1480. Okenheim's chief delight lay in the composition of Canons, of which he has left numerous examples, more remarkable for the ingenuity of their construction than the beauty of their effect. His works were held, at the time of their production, in very high repute,

and many talented scholars flocked to him for instruction. Among these was a youth, named Josquin des Prés, a genius of no common order, who did more for his Art than any Composer who had yet appeared upon the scene.

Josquin* was a native of Hainault, where he seems to have been born, about the middle of the Fifteenth Century. In early life he sang as a Chorister in the Collegiate Church of S. Quentin, of which, after completing his musical education under Okenheim, he was appointed *Maître de Chapelle.* His talent, however, was far too great to remain long hidden in a quiet Flemish town. His fame soon spread far and wide; and no long time elapsed before he became the most popular Musician in Europe. During the Pontificate of Sixtus IV. he served for some years as a member of the Papal Choir. He was honourably received at the Courts of Ercole di Ferrara, and Lorenzo de' Medici: and Louis XII, of France, made him his *Maître de Chapelle,* and treated him with unexampled favour. After the death of Louis, in the year 1515, he is believed to have entered the service of the Emperor Maximilian I, and to have spent the remainder of his life in comparative retirement at Condé, where he died on the 27th of August, 1521. The most important of his works—including seventeen complete Masses—were published, at Venice, and Fossombrone, by Ottaviano dei Petrucci, in a series of excessively rare little volumes, which are remarkable as having been the first specimens of printed music ever given to the world. Some others are still preserved, in MS, in the Library of the Sistine Chapel, and other celebrated collections. We could scarcely point to a more striking example of the purity of his style, as compared with the Discant of an earlier period, than the opening bars of his Motet, *Ave vera virginitas,* shown in the subjoined example, in which the Treble and Tenor sing a Canon

* The composer's real name was Josse Després. The diminutive, Josquin, —or, more correctly, Jossekin—by which he is familiarly known, was probably bestowed upon him while he served as a Choir-Boy.

in the Fifth below, the Alto and Tenor crossing each other in the third, fourth, seventh, and eighth bars.



After the death of Josquin, the work was vigorously carried on by a host of Composers — many of them his pupils — too numerous to mention. Prominent among these were Nicolas Gombert, Pierre de la Rue, Joannes Tinctor,* Eliziario Genet, (called, by the Italians, Carpentrasso), Claude Goudimel, Adrian Willaert, Jacques Archadelt, and, notably, Costanzo Festa. All these men worked together for good, and did real service to the cause of Art. But, unhappily, they were outnumbered by others who had no higher ambition than to obtain popularity by a servile imitation of the style of Josquin; and who, as a matter of course, imitated his weakest rather than his strongest points. These men degraded their Art by extravagances far greater than those that were condemned by Pope John XXII: and, had not an all-powerful reformer appeared to counteract their evil influence would have brought Church Music into lasting disrepute.

* The author of the earliest Musical Dictionary now extant—an invaluable treatise which has been reprinted, in its original form, by Messrs. COCKS & Co., at the end of "Hamilton's Dictionary of Musical Terms."

CHAPTER V.

Concerning the Madrigal.

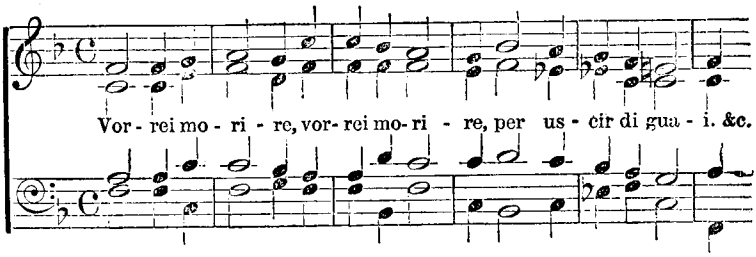
The practice of embellishing a given Subject with varied and ingenious contrapuntal devices was not, however, confined exclusively to the Ecclesiastical School of Composition. Among the rarest and most precious of the volumes printed by Ottaviano dei Petrucci, at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, are a few, filled entirely with sæcular compositions. These interesting productions are, with scarcely any exception, the work of Flemish writers: but, if we may trust the internal evidence afforded by a celebrated and extremely curious MS, preserved in the Library of the British Museum, the oldest known sæcular Part-Song owes its existence to the genius of an Englishman. The credit of having first brought this antique treasure into prominent notice is due to Sir John Hawkins. Dr. Burney expresses his belief that it "can hardly be much more modern than the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Century." It is, in truth, impossible to determine its exact age with any amount of certainty; and equally so to ascertain the name of its Composer. All we can say is, that, though rudely constructed, it exhibits a considerable amount of inventive talent; which will be readily understood when we explain that it is a strict Canon for six Voices. Its Melody, moreover, is wonderfully flowing, and well adapted to some quaint old English stanzas, beginning—

> "Sumer is i cumen in,
> Lhude sing Cuccu."

The rude attempts of the earlier Contrapuntists led, in process of time, to a style of composition, which, soon after the middle of the Sixteenth Century, attained its highest degree of development in the Madrigal—a species of Pastoral Ditty, sung by three, four, or more Voices, without accompaniment, and generally abounding in fugal treatment and points of imitation of the most ingenious description.

It was undoubtedly in Flanders that this delightful conception was first brought to perfection. From thence it spread rapidly to Venice, to Rome, and, no long time afterwards, to England, where it was introduced by an enthusiastic amateur, named Nicholas Yonge, in the year 1588, and cultivated with extraordinary success. Its greatest masters, in the Low Countries, were Jacques Archadelt and Huberto Waelrant; to the former of whom we owe the delicious inspiration, *Il bianco e dolce cigno;* while the latter has left us a no less perfect specimen in *Vorrei morire*—better known in England as "*Hard by a fountain.*"

HUBERTO WAELRANT, 1550.



The most popular Venetian writers were Adrian Willaert—a Fleming by birth, but long resident in Venice, and the reputed founder of the great Venetian School—Giovanni Ferretti, Giovanni Croce, and Cipriano di Rore. Our own English composers, Richard Edwardes, Byrd, Morley, Douland, and a goodly company of their contemporaries, produced works quite equal in beauty to any of those we have hitherto mentioned. But, unquestionably, the finest Madrigals in existence are those of the Roman School, written, between the years 1540 and 1600, by Costanzo Festa, Felice Anerio, Luca Marenzio, and—a greater genius than all—Palestrina.

The works of these great writers are imperishable; and, when really well sung, give as much pleasure, at the present day, as they did when they were first given to the world. In England, the art of singing them has never been permitted to die out; and there is certainly no country in Europe in which we can now hear them to so great advantage as in our own.

CHAPTER VI.

Concerning the "School of Palestrina."

We have said that, during the epoch which immediately followed the death of Josquin des Prés, composers of Church Music were tempted to indulge in a multitude of extravagant conceits, which, instead of raising their Art to a higher degree of perfection, tended only to bring it into disrepute. Caring no more for harmonious effect than for symmetry of form, too many writers were perfectly satisfied with their work, so long as they could make it more difficult to understand than that of their predecessors. A habit, at one time very prevalent, of lowering the tone of Religious Music, by founding it upon phrases of Profane Melody, rather than upon themes selected from the grand old Hymns and Antiphons collected by S. Gregory, gave great offence to earnest-minded men. A still graver cause of scandal was the utter disregard manifested, even by really good Musicians, for the sense of the words they treated, and their irreverent custom of mixing together texts from Holy Scripture and sentences from the Liturgy, with an incongruity of purpose which rendered them wholly unintelligible. These abuses, and others equally notorious, became at last so intolerable, that in the year 1564 Pope Pius IV. resolved to put an end to them by prohibiting the use of any Polyphonic Music* whatever in the Services of the Church.

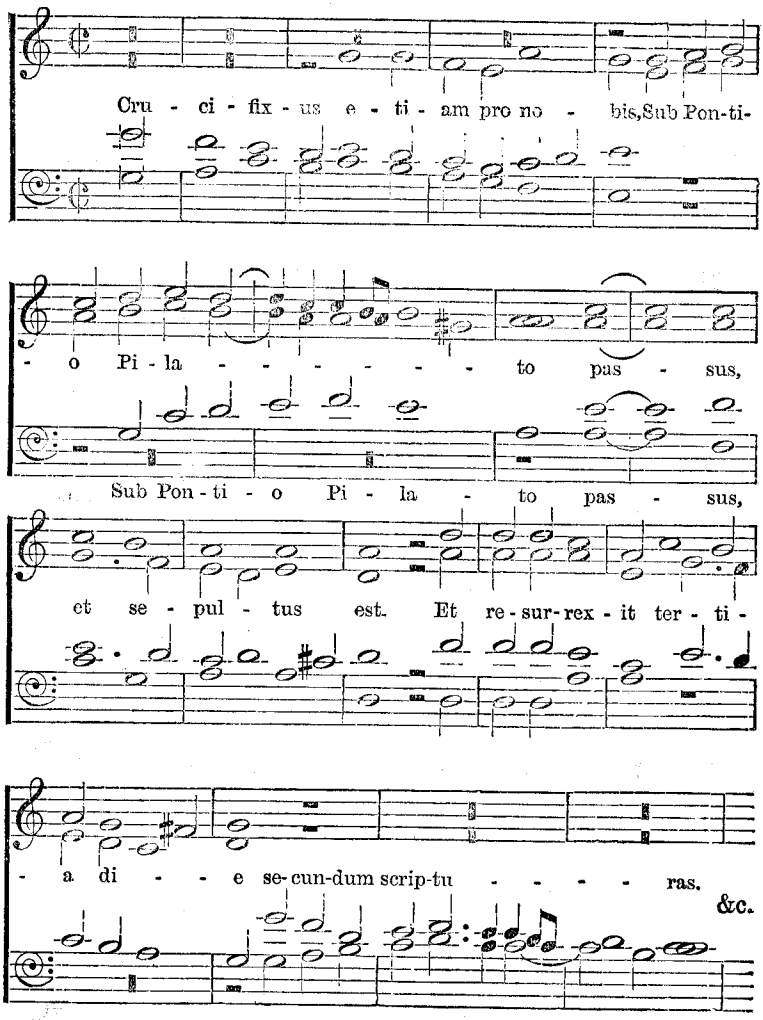
* Modern writers have given the name of "Polyphonic Music" to that style of unaccompanied vocal composition in which the Subject is given to each part by turns; every Voice taking an equally important share in the general effect.

But, before proceeding to this extreme measure, he appointed a Commission, composed of eight well-known Cardinals, to investigate the matter, fairly and dispassionately, and devise, if possible, a remedy for these flagrant evils. In the hope of removing the necessity for any sweeping change, the Commissioners called upon Palestrina—who at that time held the appointment of *Maestro di Capella* at the Church of S. Maria Maggiore—to compose, if he could, some Music which should not only be free from extravagance, and pedantry, but should also be written in a really solemn and devotional style. To this appeal Palestrina responded by producing three Masses, which were privately sung before the members of the Commission, on the 28th of April, 1565. The contrast between these great works, and those they were intended to supplant, was most satisfactory; and one, especially—since known as the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*—gave such intense delight to all who heard it, that it was unanimously accepted as the model to which all Church Music should, in future, conform. Two months later, on the 19th of June, this Mass was solemnly sung in the Sistine Chapel; and Pope Pius IV. then expressed himself no less delighted than the Cardinals who formed the Commission. The success of the experiment was complete, and Palestrina was justly regarded as the saviour of his beloved Art.

The style of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, though grave and reverent to the last degree, is by no means wanting either in spirit or expression. The amount of learning and ingenuity displayed in its construction can only be truly appreciated by those who have themselves studied Counterpoint very deeply indeed: yet, so carefully are its artifices concealed, that it is almost impossible, when listening to it, to believe that the Composer could have had a thought to spare for anything beyond the devout and unaffected simplicity by which it is characterised from beginning to end. In order that full justice may be done to its beauty, it is indispensable that it should be sung, as Palestrina intended, by a tolerably numerous Choir of unaccompanied Voices; but the following

passage may perhaps serve to give some faint idea of its prevailing character :—

PALESTRINA.



The *Missa Papæ Marcelli* soon gained for Palestrina an European reputation; and he was at once acknowledged as the greatest Composer that had ever yet appeared. His fertility of invention

was inexhaustible. It is to be feared that a great number of his works were lost, no long time after his death, through the mismanagement of his son, Igino; but we still possess no less than ninety-five *Masses*, three hundred and twenty-seven *Motets*, two volumes of *Madrigals*, two more of *Madrigali Spirituali*, *Magnificats*, *Hymns*, *Litanies*, and a large number of other equally interesting works, a complete edition of which is now in course of publication by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, of Leipzig, in a form which cannot but be most acceptable to all true lovers of the purest School of Vocal Harmony that has ever existed.

It is not, however, for these great works, alone, that we are indebted to the genius of Palestrina. His influence over the Composers of his time was most salutary. Fired by the desire of emulating his beautiful harmonies, a host of writers, who, but for him, would have wasted their time upon the vain conceits condemned by the Commission, rose to the highest degree of eminence; and so many fine works were produced, before the close of the century, that the period between the production of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, and the year 1594—that of its author's death—has been justly called "The Golden Age of Ecclesiastical Music."

The most celebrated writers of this brilliant epoch were, in the great Roman School, Vittoria, Felice and Francesco Anerio, Giovanni Maria and Bernadino Nanini, Francesco Suriano, and Luca Marenzio. In Venice the most honourable posts were held by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, Giovanni Croce, Cipriano di Rore, and Vincenzo Ruffo. Hans Leo Hasler carried the traditions of the Venetian School, with the happiest results, to Nuremberg. Orlando di Lasso, a native of Mons in Flanders, transplanted those of the Low Countries to Munich. While, in our own country, the genius of Tallis, Byrd, Farrant, Douland, Michael Este, Tye, Morley, and a number of other writers of equal earnestness, and scarcely less ability, raised the fine old English School to so high a level, that its best productions may fairly take rank with those of any Continental Composers of the Sixteenth Century, short of Palestrina himself.

CHAPTER VII.

Concerning the Hymnody of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

One remarkable characteristic of "The Golden Age" was, the enthusiasm with which the science of Hymnody was cultivated, not by Musicians alone, but, by men of all sorts and conditions, in Italy, France, Germany, England, and almost every other country in Europe.

The use of the Hymn, as an aspiration of praise to God, is as old as Christianity itself; but, we have no certain evidence of the introduction of true Metrical Hymnody into the Services of the Church before the Fourth Century. S. Ambrose is believed to have been the first writer who called the serious attention of the Western Church to this important subject. Many of his Latin Hymns, composed between the years 374 and 397, are of great beauty. It is said, that, on the occasion of the Baptism of S. Augustine, he, and that great Saint, composed, and sang for the first time, the glorious verses of the *Te Deum*. Be that as it may, it is certain that he did good service, not only by his own writings, but also by collecting together, and carefully revising, a number of Hymns already in general use. Prudentius, Sedulius, and S. Venantius Fortunatus, added innumerable treasures to the store. During the last decade of the Sixth Century, S. Gregory the Great still farther increased it, by many invaluable contributions of his own composition. And, before his death, in the year 604, this celebrated reformer of Church Music succeeded in bringing together treasures enough to constitute the nucleus of every

really valuable series since given to the world, as well as in correcting and revising the venerable Melodies to which they were adapted at the time of their composition, and to which many of them are still sung, both on the Continent, and in England.

In the year 1589, Palestrina arranged an entire set of these fine Church Melodies for four and five Voices; and published them, at Rome, under the title of *Hymni totius anni.* The beauty of his settings is indescribable: but, unhappily, they are far too difficult for general use. Indeed, the necessity for what we should now call a "congregational style of singing" had already been felt by S. Philip Neri—the founder of the "Congregation of Oratorians"—who encouraged his friend, Animuccia, to form a large collection of simple Hymns of a popular character, which, between the years 1565 and 1570, were published, in two volumes, under the title of *Laudi spirituali.* To these, P. Soto added a third volume, in 1588, and a fourth, in 1591. The results of the experiment were most satisfactory, and undoubtedly contributed much to the success of the one great object to which S. Philip devoted his entire life—the conversion of sinners. The great mass of the people were delighted with the music he provided for them; and, for very many years after his death, the Hymns were enthusiastically sung, not only in his own large Church, S. Maria in Vallicella, and the Oratory attached to his Convent, but even in the public streets of Rome.

Martin Luther's attachment to popular Hymnody is too well known to need comment. He himself wrote an immense number of Hymns—or, as they are called in Germany, Chorals—and first published them, in the year 1524, at Wittenberg, with Music, arranged for four, five, and six Voices, by his friend, Johannes Walther. The words being written in the German language, and the Music selected from the most popular Melodies of the day, both sacred and sæcular, it is not wonderful that they were enthusiastically received on every side. Walther was a good Musician, and did his work well, setting the Melody in the Tenor,

in accordance with the then general custom, and accompanying it with solid and substantial Harmonies, which, when sung by a large body of Voices, could not fail to produce a grand effect. The Germans soon learned to sing them; and continue to sing them, to this day, as zealously as they did three centuries ago. Later Composers delighted in using them as themes for Organ Voluntaries, and other pieces of Sacred Music. And Sebastian Bach, who was more deeply penetrated with their true spirit than any writer of his own, or any other age, used them in his Oratorios, and Church-Cantatas, with an effect concerning which we shall have occasion to speak more fully in a future chapter.

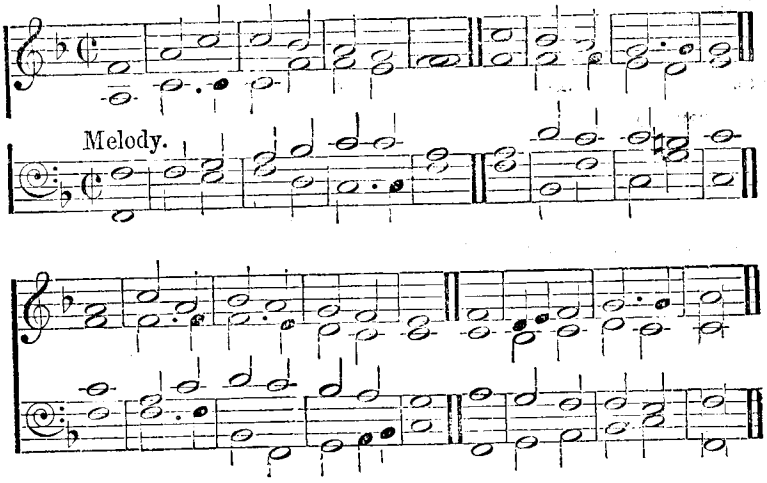
Though the Hymn Tune was, at one period, little less popular in France, than in Germany, the history of its career in that country is a brief one. It first became known, among the people, in connection with the Metrical Psalms of Theodore Beza, and Clement Marot. These were adapted to well-known popular Melodies, by Guillaume Franc, Louis Bourgeois, and, notably, Claude Goudimel, who published a large collection, in Paris, in the year 1565. Claudin le Jeune also attained great popularity, by means of a Psalter, printed in 1633, the settings in which were of a more simple and "congregational" character than those of Goudimel. But, though these Metrical Psalms were once sung with enthusiasm by all classes of people, the taste for them soon died out, and after the close of the century we hear of them no more.

In England the case has been very different. The "*Old Version*" of the Psalms of David, first printed, in a complete form in 1562, was wisely adapted to Tunes already well known in France and Germany. These Tunes were harmonised, from time to time, by the best English Composers of the day, including Tallis, Parsons, Edwardes, Douland, and Ravenscroft. Complete "Psalters," containing extraordinarily beautiful settings, by these, and other authors, were printed by John Daye, in 1563, and Thomas Este, in 1594; and, in 1621, the most famous collection of all was published by Thomas Ravenscroft, from whose "*Whole Booke of Psalmes*," set for four Voices, with the Melody in the

Tenor, we subjoin an example which will give a fair idea of the whole:—

DUMFERLINE. "SCOTCH TUNE." Set by THOMAS TOMKINS.

From RAVENSCROFT'S "WHOLE BOOKE OF PSALMES." (1621.)



Many of the Melodies contained in these fine old collections are still in common use. They are, indeed, as well suited to the contents of the modern Hymn Book as to the Metrical Psalms to which they were originally adapted: but, unhappily, they are generally associated, at the present day, with Harmonies so much inferior to those of Ravenscroft, and his talented colleagues, that the Tunes themselves lose all their native dignity, and are often scarcely recognisable. This circumstance might, perhaps, be considered excusable, were there any real difficulty in the way of singing the old arrangements; but, the foregoing example will show that no village Choir, capable of singing in parts at all, need be afraid to attempt them in their integrity.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Rise of the Modern School of Music.

The closing years of the Sixteenth Century were rendered remarkable by an innovation, which soon began to exercise an extraordinary and quite unexpected effect both upon Sacred and Secular Music, and ended by placing an impassable barrier between the mediæval and the modern Schools.

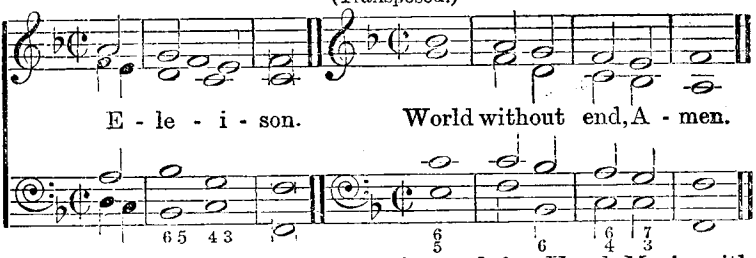
Up to this time, the employment of Dissonances had been permitted in two ways only. It was considered indispensable that they should be introduced, either as Suspensions or as Passing-Notes. The idea of using them without preparation was first conceived by Claudio Monteverde, whose works, though now familiar only to the Antiquary, fairly establish his claim to be regarded as the true originator of Modern Music.

Monteverde was born at Cremona in the year 1568. In early life he was appointed *Maestro di Capella* at Mantua, where he produced his opera, *Arianna,* in 1607, and his still more celebrated *Orfeo,* in 1608. In 1613 he obtained the appointment of *Maestro di Capella* at the cathedral of San Marco, in Venice, in which city he continued to reside until his death, in the year 1643. He undoubtedly did more for the advancement of Dramatic Music than any other writer of the age; but we shall speak more fully of this in a future chapter. For the present, we are concerned only with his treatment of the Chord of the Seventh, which he first used in his Madrigals with a freedom scarcely less reserved than that claimed by Composers of the present day, and very much in the same manner.* As a matter of course, this bold

* For detailed descriptions of the Chords mentioned in this Chapter, see "Practical Harmony; a Manual for Young Students, by W. S. Rockstro." (Cocks & Co.)

disregard of established usage met, at first, with violent opposition; though, in all probability, the sweeping change it was destined to effect was but very imperfectly foreseen, either by its opponents, or its advocates. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of its influence as a revolutionary agent; for the principle it involved was essentially a progressive one. If the Seventh could be taken without preparation, why not the Ninth? Why not any other Dissonant Harmony? As may readily be supposed, other Dissonances were so taken: and thus arose a new and captivating style, separated from that of the Old Masters by a gulf which no compromise could ever bridge over, and so well defined, that, in most cases, the presence or absence of a Dominant Seventh is sufficient, without farther evidence, to prove whether a doubtful composition is to be referred to a period earlier or later than the last decade of the Sixteenth Century or the first of the Seventeenth.

Mediæval Cadence. PALESTRINA. Modern Cadence. EARL OF MORNINGTON. (Transposed.)



The new Harmonies were chiefly used for Vocal Music with Instrumental Accompaniments; and, soon after the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, Ludovico Viadana introduced another change which greatly facilitated their adoption. Hitherto, the Instrumental Bass had coincided exactly with the part allotted to the lowest Voice; but Viadana gave it an independent Melody of its own; carried it throughout the piece; and proposed to treat it as the basis of the whole.* Moreover, for the convenience of the performer, he accompanied it by figures, representing the Chords it was to carry. On this account, he is often spoken of as the

* Hence the origin of the word "Thoroughbass."

inventor of Figured Basses: but his claim to this honour is untenable; for an interesting example, with figures appended to every note, is found in a MS tract, of extreme antiquity, written, in English not much less quaint than that found in the prose compositions of Chaucer and Lydgate, by a certain Lyonel Power, and now preserved in the Library of the British Museum.

These rapid movements in advance were followed by a still more important change; brought about, not by the energy of a single adventurous spirit, but by such slow degrees that it is impossible to say how, when, or where it originated. This was the abandonment of the antient Modes,* in favour of the Major and Minor Modes of modern use. The antient Modes were essentially vocal in their character; and, as the cultivation of Instrumental Music advanced, they naturally fell into desuetude. Examples of their use may be found, it is true, in some splendid Organ Fugues, by Sebastian Bach, and others of his School; but these are exceptional cases. The true genius of the Modes is vocal; and when pure Vocal Music—the Music that Palestrina loved—gave place to Music with Instrumental Accompaniment, they too gave place to Scales better fitted to play their part in the new order of things: and so it came to pass, that, in process of time, the antient Modes were forgotten; and, long before Durante established his sovereignty over the sweet Neapolitan School, they had entirely ceased to be regarded as a necessary part of musical education.

The new system was now complete; and all that was necessary for its fuller development was the choice of a direction in which it could move without restraint. It moved, as a matter of fact, in several directions; the most important of which were represented by the Cantata, the Opera, the Oratorio, and the Symphony. To the consideration of each of these leading forms of Art it is necessary that we should devote a separate chapter.

---

* See page 8.

CHAPTER IX.

The Cantata.

That the Cantata is of older date than either the Oratorio, or the Opera, is the only conclusion at which it is possible to arrive, after a careful consideration of the circumstances under which we first hear of it: the theory, therefore, that it is the offspring, rather than the parent, of the Lyric Drama, though often broached, is clearly untenable.

The term, *Cantata*, simply means, a piece of music intended to be sung—just as *Sonata* means a piece intended to be played. But it is *de rigueur* that it should be sung to some kind of Instrumental Accompaniment. The character of the Poem to which it is adapted is immaterial. It may be either sacred, or profane; heroic, or pastoral; tragic, light-hearted, or even comic. It was, at first, sung always by a single Voice, and accompanied only by a single Instrument. For this reason, the style in which it was written was fitly called "Monodic," the Melody being necessarily confined to a single part, and not, as in the Polyphonic School of Music already described,* given to several Voices in succession.

The earliest examples of this style on record were produced, at Florence, not long before the close of the Sixteenth Century, by Vincenzo Galilei,† and Giulio Caccini, and sung by them, with immense applause, at the house of Giovanni Bardi, Count of Vernio. These pieces were written at a time when the Count of Vernio, aided by a number of intelligent Poets and Musicians, was endeavouring to reproduce the method of recitation believed to have been inseparable from the antient Greek Drama. Hence, some of them—such as Galilei's "*Il Conte Ugolino*"—depended very much for their effect upon the introduction of the dramatic

---

* See page 24. Note.

† The father of Galileo Galilei, the celebrated Astronomer.

element; and this circumstance, as we shall see later on, exercised an irresistible influence upon the prevailing taste.

The efforts of these adventurous students were nobly followed up by Ludovico Viadana, Benedetto Ferrari, Tarquinio Merula, and, especially, Carissimi, to whom we are indebted for some great improvements in this particular style of composition. As Art advanced, the Accompaniment was enriched by the presence of a greater number of Instruments. Sometimes, two or more Voices were employed. Airs and Recitatives were intermixed with more forcible contrast than before. A more graceful flow of Melody was cultivated; and, during the course of the Seventeenth Century, Benedetto Marcello, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Pergolesi, and their great associates, Giovanni Maria and Marc Antonio Buononcini, and Porpora, brought the Cantata to the highest degree of perfection it was destined to attain in the land of its birth.

In later times a few great German Composers, moved by admiration for the Italian School, treated the Cantata with marked success. Handel has left us some splendid examples of this style. Mozart proved his perfect mastery over it in *Non temer;* Beethoven, in *Ah perfido;* Mendelssohn, in *Infelice.* But these were exceptional cases. The true German Cantata bears very little resemblance to its Italian namesake. Its style is grander, and more fitted for the Church than the Chamber. It is almost always adapted to sacred words; and is generally written for a full complement of Solo Voices, assisted, in most cases, by a Chorus. The Church Cantatas of Sebastian Bach are too well known, as specimens of this kind of composition, to need more than a passing allusion; as are, also, the *Lobgesang* and *Lauda Sion* of Mendelssohn, and many, by other authors.

The Cantata has also been cultivated with great success in England. Purcell's *Mad Tom* and *Mad Bess* are full of dramatic expression of a very high order indeed; while, considered as the exponent of a later style, Sir Sterndale Bennett's *May Queen* need fear comparison with the work of no Continental Composer whatever.

CHAPTER X.

On the Invention and Development of the Opera.

Giovanni Bardi's attempt to restore the style of declamation peculiar to Hellenic Tragedy led to results little anticipated, either by the Count of Vernio himself, or the enthusiastic spirits who shared his counsels and his labours.

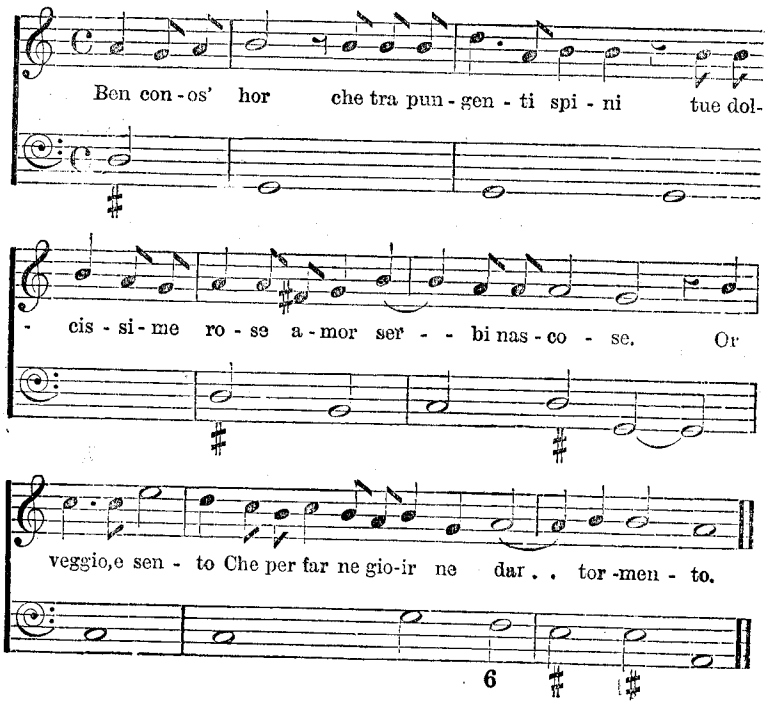
During the period of the so-called Renaissance, the sole aim of men of learning was, the assimilation of the Literature and Art of the Middle Ages to the purest models of Classical Antiquity. In the hope of contributing towards the completion of this great scheme, Vincenzo Galilei, Pietro Strozzi, Ottavio Rinuccini, Giulio Caccini, Jacopo Peri, and some other Florentines of high literary and musical reputation, met, first at the house of Giovanni Bardi, and, after his removal to Rome in 1592, at that of his friend Jacopo Corsi, to consult together as to the possibility of adapting Italian Poetry to Music such as that supposed to have been formerly sung to the verses of Æschylus and Sophocles. They neither looked for, nor desired, the inspiration of an original idea. Their wildest ambition soared no higher than the resuscitation of an Art which had been dead for ages; yet, the end they really achieved was, the invention of modern Recitative.

We have already described the Cantata as the first fruit of these interesting *réunions*. With the aid of this artistic form as a basis, and Recitative as a mode of expression, the construction of a regular Lyric Drama became comparatively easy. Attempts to create such a work had already been made, in the Madrigal style and, in one of them, the great Luca Marenzio himself had not disdained to take part. But it was reserved for Peri to produce the first true Opera that was ever honoured with a public repre-

sentation. After trying his powers upon a Pastoral, called *Dafne*, which was privately performed, at the Palazzo Corsi, in 1597, he composed, in conjunction with the poet Rinuccini, his justly celebrated *Euridice*—a grand *Opera seria* in every sense of the term, which, in the year 1600, was first produced, at Florence, with extraordinary success, on the occasion of the marriage of King Henri IV. of France with Mary de' Medici.

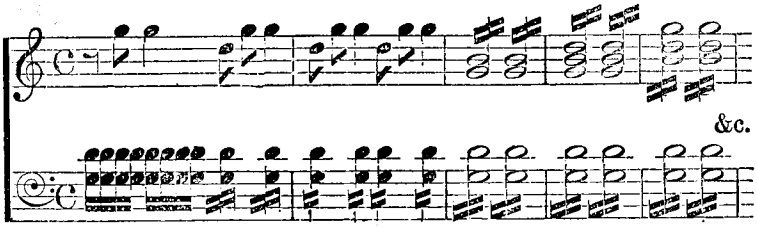
Though it may be assumed as certain that no modern audience would patiently sit out a single Act of this most interesting work, it is, nevertheless, taking the date of its production into consideration, a very miracle of genius. It was printed, in score, soon after its first performance, barred, and with the bass figured throughout. From a copy fortunately preserved in the Library of the British Museum, we transcribe the following specimen of the newly-invented style of Recitative :—

From PERI'S "EURIDICE."



Encouraged by Peri's success, Caccini also gave his whole attention to this kind of Music; and proved his ability to produce it, by entirely re-setting Rinuccini's *Euridice*, and supplementing it by another work of the same character, called *Il Ratto di Cefalo*. But these early attempts were all soon thrown into the shade by the more ambitious experiments of Claudio Monteverde, whose new system of Harmony was already beginning to command serious attention. In his first great Opera, *Arianna*, (1607), he expressed the sorrows of his deserted heroine in passionate tones which excited universal admiration. In his second, *Orfeo*, (1608), he introduced a far larger Orchestra than any that had ever before been employed for the accompaniment of Solo Voices. And, in another still more original work—*Clorinda, e Tancredi*—he illustrated the conflict between his Hero and Heroine, by means of a *tremolo*, introduced, with striking effect, exactly in the way in which it is used by modern composers.

MONTEVERDE.



Had these novel effects been imitated—as they would most certainly have been in our own day—by a crowd of half-educated seekers after popularity, they could not have failed to introduce a lamentable degradation of style. Happily for Art, they aroused the attention of Composers no less in earnest than Monteverde himself. Foremost among these, Cavalli strove hard to work out his leader's principles to their legitimate conclusion. The improvements he suggested led to others of greater importance. For instance, in Cesti's *Orontea*—produced, at Venice, in 1649—we find the monotony of continuous Recitative relieved by strains of

a character far more melodious than that adopted by Peri, or Caccini, even in their happiest moments. Alessandro Scarlatti gave a still more prominent position to the regularly constructed *Aria*. His pupil, Nicolo Porpora, entered warmly into his views; and, before the close of the Eighteenth Century, Jomelli, Pergolesi, Sacchini, Guglielmi, Durante, Paesiello, and Zingarelli, each played his part in the realisation of that ideal form which was brought to absolute perfection by the genius of Cimarosa and Mozart.

Up to this point, we have traced the history of the Opera in a direct line, from its birth, in Florence, to a condition in which it still continues to give the most exquisite pleasure to all true lovers of Music. We must now consider it in some of its collateral branches.

As the Madrigal, originating in Flanders, was translated to a more perfect state of existence in Italy, so was the Opera transferred from its Italian home to other countries, in some of which it was destined to pass through a distinct and highly characteristic phase of development. In England, it flourished brilliantly under the management of Handel; who, though, by birth, a German, was initiated into the mysteries of dramatic composition in Italy, and learned, from Italians, all that it was then possible to learn. Handel first came to this country in 1710, and brought out an opera called *Rinaldo*, the success of which tempted him, in 1712, to settle permanently in London. In 1720 he undertook the management of the Italian Opera Company, then known as the Royal Academy of Music, for which he composed the greater number of his dramatic works, represented by more than forty Operas, every one of which contains gems of imperishable beauty.* Unfortunately, it is only by the beauty of detached pieces that these great artistic creations are now known to the general public. It is scarcely probable that they will ever again be represented on the Stage; for, the *libretti* on which they are based are so badly constructed, and so unworthy of the Music which adorns them, that it is doubtful whether any amount of

* A minute description of most of Handel's Operas will be found in Vol. IV of Dr. Burney's "History of Music."