

When Music Meant England

(By EDWIN EVANS, in *John o' London's Weekly*.)

There are few romances in musical history to compare with that of the rediscovery, after nearly four centuries of oblivion, of a Golden Age in which England was the leading musical country in Europe. It is the religious music of the period immediately preceding the Reformation that has waited so long to be rediscovered, and whose wonders have come as a revelation even to those who should have been prepared for them.

Most of the credit for this rediscovery belongs to Dr. R. R. Terry, of Westminster Cathedral. Already in 1896, when at Downside, absorbed in the study of Palestrina, he found himself wondering at the very small quantity of English music available in print to represent the corresponding movement in this country. He dates the awakening of his own enthusiasm from his study of Arkwright's *Old English Edition*, and his perusal, at the British Museum, of *Additional MSS.*, 17802-5, comprising twelve Masses of the sixteenth century by Christopher Tye, John Taverner, John Sheperd, the two Mundys, and others. Impressed with their remarkable beauty, he embarked upon a close study of the period, the earliest result of which was the performance, probably the first since the Reformation, of Byrd's Masses for three and five voices, and Tye's for six. He also discovered a Mass for four voices by Thomas Tallys, which had escaped the notice of scholars.

But it is chiefly from 1901 onwards, when he was appointed to Westminster, that Dr. Terry found in the proximity of museums and libraries the opportunities to pursue the research to which his enthusiasm supplied the incentive. The result has been the performance in the Cathedral of a long succession of forgotten masterpieces. It includes no fewer than 37 Masses by English composers, hitherto unperformed in modern times. In this number are comprised all but two of the famous 18 preserved in the Bodleian Library, which were the subject of Sir John Stainer's lectures at Oxford. There have also been performed the whole of Byrd's two volumes of *Gradualia*, and his two volumes of *Cantiones*, the joint volume of *Cantiones* by Tallys and Byrd; the whole of the extant works of John Taverner with the exception of about three motets; the Lamentations of Thomas Tallys and Robert Whyte; all the volumes of *Cantiones* for five voices by Peter Phillips, and nearly all those which he wrote for eight voices; and all the known works of Richard Dering.

Of all these composers Dr. Terry regards John Taverner as the biggest "find" in English music. He is a veritable Bach in the freedom of his polyphony, and this appears the more wonderful when one remembers that the earliest compositions of Palestrina, which are, in comparison, much less advanced, made their appearance about ten years after Taverner's death. Between the best works of the two composers there is an interval of perhaps half a century, which prompts Dr. Terry to declare that these English writers were, as a body, more than a century ahead of their

time, for it took the musicians of the Continent fully so long to attain to the same degree of emancipation from the scholastic restrictions which had hampered the early development of polyphony. It is chiefly because of this emancipation that their works, unlike much of the contemporary music of the Continent, appeal to the listener as living music, and not as antiquarian specimens. That is, perhaps, the most striking feature in this revival of Tudor music.

Their methods were, in the light of their day, daring to the point of audacity. They, emphatically, were the modernists of their period. They wrote boldly as they chose, but the effect always "came off" simply because they knew thoroughly well what they were doing. Their sense of tone color was remarkable. They always knew how to obtain contrast within the limited means of concerted voices, and it is worthy of note that at the very time when four-part harmony was establishing its tyranny on the Continent, they seldom wrote for four voices, preferring to vary the number of parts. When instrumental music began to assert its sway,

they almost alone withstood its influence and preserved the characteristic vocal color which they knew so well how to handle that a six-part motet by the best of them has almost the rich sonority of a double choir.

How did this beautiful music come to be forgotten? There are many reasons. One is the difficult notation, which has to be translated, and the fact that much of it exists not in score, but in scattered parts. Another is the circumstance that Burney and Hawkins, who laid the foundation of musical history in this country, appeared at a time when the current of musical interest was flowing from other directions, and were unsympathetic to this earlier style. A third is the absurd superstition, upheld during two centuries, that no music could possibly be good that did not come from abroad. But none of these reasons would have been powerful enough to stifle these masterpieces had there not been a break in the tradition at the time of the Reformation. When we read in Foxe that Taverner, who had written such beautiful Masses and motets, afterwards "repented him very much that he had made songes to Popishe ditties in the tyme of his blindness," we have an inkling of the way in which this music came to be regarded. And when religious tolerance was restored it had already passed out of all knowledge.

Mary in the Bible

One of the classic objections to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin is that it is found in the Bible. Under that objection runs the unbiblical fallacy that the Bible alone is the sole and sufficient guide to salvation. The Bible openly asserts its own insufficiency by telling us: "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." To the Church it was said: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

Why these words? Why this commission, if the Bible alone be all sufficient? The lambs and sheep may have the Bible, but without the Church they will go hungry, because unfed. To return from this digression: has the Bible nothing to say about the honor due to Mary? Individual texts aplenty, both in the Old and New Testaments, vindicate the dignity of the Virgin Mother. A more comprehensive answer is found in the thesis, the subject matter of the Bible. For while there is a many-colored variety in style and matter in God's book, there is inseparable, essential unity. Otherwise it wouldn't be a book, but a mere collection of books. The Bible is the divine story of the fall and the redemption of man. The hero, the central figure of the Old and New Testaments is Christ. He was promised in the Old; He arrives in the New.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was God. In due time the word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us. The promised Redeemer was not God alone, but God made man, the Son of God and the Son of Mary. Hence without Mary there would be no Bible. No Bible without the Incarnate God, no Incarnate God without Mary. The mission, the divine dignity of our Blessed Mother, is as inseparable from the Bible as

is the human nature of Christ from His divine nature. To exclude Mary from the Bible would be like shutting off the sky from the horizon. When Satan, the serpent, successfully tempted Eve to violate God's command about eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Paradise, he defeated the divine plan. He changed the earth from a place of pleasure to a vale of tears. The forbidden fruit was sweet to the taste, but it has sickened the stomach of the human race.

But God smote the serpent and healed the wound inflicted on man: "Because thou hast done this thing thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth. Upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for the heel. (Gen. 4, 15).

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman." Who is this woman destined by God to crush the head of the serpent? She is the morning star, the herald of the dawn, our tainted nature's solitary boast, the Virgin Mother of Him who conquered death and hell.

Therein is the pregnant, prophetic sentence whose growth and development constituted the Bible. To eliminate that one verse would be to pluck the heart out of the Bible.

God has legions of conquering angels that could have crushed the head of the serpent. Why didn't He order them to do so? Satan's pride would have been flattered by the formidable army arrayed against him. He would have lost his power, but retained his pride. Oh! the depths of the riches, of the wisdom, of the knowledge of God. How incomprehen-

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