

Church and Organ Music. The Compleat Organist. VIII. Of Old English Organ Music (Continued)

Author(s): Harvey Grace

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 55, No. 857 (Jul. 1, 1914), pp. 452-455

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/907756>

Accessed: 23-11-2015 17:33 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Church and Organ Music.

THE COMPLEAT ORGANIST.

BY HARVEY GRACE.

(Continued from June number, p. 386.)

VIII.—OF OLD ENGLISH ORGAN MUSIC.

Wishing to look up a point connected with English organ music, I recently took down Dr. Walker's 'History of music in England,' feeling sure that so popular an instrument and its composers would be adequately dealt with therein.

The index, however, while referring me to viols, virginals, and lute, was dumb as to the organ, and search through the volume brought no greater haul than a few passing and disparaging comments on organ music. Reference to the volume of lectures delivered at the Tercentenary of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, and published under the title 'English music (1604-1904),' brought me little more. The lecturers, among whom were occupants of august organ-lofts, dealt with the pianoforte, the water-organ of the ancients and the organ of to-day, old English songs, dances, string and wind instruments and their composers, and operas; but on the subject of organ music a decent silence was maintained. Even the lecture on the cathedral composers and their works contained no reference to their organ compositions. The one ewe lamb of organ music was provided at the lecture on 'Music in England in 1604,' when amongst the illustrations was played a little organ prelude by Coperario—a gentleman who, having studied in Italy for a space, ever after so miscalled himself, regarding it as an improvement on the rude and homely Cooper he was born. And yet between 1604 and 1904 some more than passable English organ music had been produced, though the most ardent patriot among us must admit that until recent years our instrumental output was not on the same level of excellence as our choral works. Our shortcomings in the matter of organ music in particular were due to a variety of circumstances. In the first place, the instrument bore a much more important part in the Roman and Lutheran services than in the English. Then the pedal organ was some three hundred years arriving hither from the Continent. Add to this the fact of our being about a century late in adopting equal temperament, and it is easy to understand why English organ music was so much behind that of the Continent,—how much behind can easily be seen by a glance at the works of some of the earlier Italian composers and some of the pre-Bach men in Germany.

Putting aside Buxtehude as the outstanding figure before Bach came on the scene, there were such remarkable men as Scheidt, Froberger, Hanff, Weckmann, and others, much of whose music is to-day almost as vital as that of Bach. When we consider how our Blows and Purcells were writing for manuals only, often with an eye to harpsichord performance as well, and then look at these opening and closing bars of a piece of German organ music written by one Franz Tunder, born in 1614—nearly a

half-century before Purcell!—we can see at a glance our handicap:

Ex. 1. Variations on 'Jesus Christus unser Heiland,'
Var. I.

Man. *f* &c.

Ped. *ff* C.F.

End of Var. III. *ff*

Ped.

To the practical drawbacks mentioned above must be added the fact that our genius had always been vocal rather than instrumental. The very excellence of our polyphonic composers' choral-writing was against our instrumental progress. Men who were giants in vocal music came down with a run to sometimes less than ordinary stature when composing for instruments. The obsession of Handel, with his matchless choral technique and his sketchy instrumental methods, was a further blow from which we have only recently recovered.

But because we have produced no Bach or Rheinberger we need not therefore unduly belittle ourselves. The work of our early organ composers, in spite of the drawbacks under which they laboured, was often astonishingly good. Such men as Gibbons, Blow, and Lock were far too great to be entirely overcome by the deficiencies of the instruments of their day; so that, while we have never had any considerable bulk of good native organ music, we have always had some of which we need not be ashamed.

The flame has burned more or less steadily since the 16th century, flickering ominously at times (with occasional spurts when a Wesley came on the scene), but to-day a fire at which we may look with pride and even more hope. It needs but an increased desire on the part of our players to warm themselves thereat for the future to be wholly bright. This prejudice against the native composer is of course not confined to the organ loft, but it has always been no less strong there than elsewhere, and this also has been against English organ music. Hardly yet is the day past when for an Englishman to compose serious organ music is to invite the neglect of his colleagues, who will cheerfully spend perspiring, shin-aching hours over a difficult foreign work or a complicated orchestral disarrangement. In such doings, however, so far from being daring innovators, they merely follow the custom of the 'good old times.' Drifting on a day into the office of Walker & Sons, the organ-builders, I saw hung on the wall the programme of a recital given in the factory on March 27, 1848, 'at half-past two o'clock precisely,' by Thomas Adams. Now Adams, as we all know, was not only a fine player,—was not he known as 'the Thalberg of the organ?'—but a notable composer as well. One might have expected him to include a fair quantity of real organ music in his programme. Here, however, is his selection, and it needs but the substitution of Wagner

and Tchaikovsky for Haydn and Handel, and the inclusion of some light organ pieces in place of three of the improvisations, to make it a typical programme of certain of our modern recitalists :

PART I.

(The selected pieces, with the exception of the variations, from Handel.)

1. Extemporeous —
2. { Air, 'Lord, remember David' 'Redemption.'
Chorus, 'Ye sons of Israel' 'Joshua.'
3. 'Adeste Fideles,' with variations Adams.
4. { Air, 'Heart, the seat of soft delight' } 'Acis and Galatea.'
Chorus, 'O, the pleasure of the plains' }
5. Extemporeous —
6. { 'With thee, the unsheltered moor' } 'Solomon.'
Chorus, 'From the censor' }

PART II.

(The selected pieces from Haydn.)

1. Symphony in E minor —
2. 'Graceful consort' 'Creation.'
3. Extemporeous —
4. { Andante 8th grand Symphony.
Finale 5th grand Symphony.
5. { 'Spring, her lovely charms' 'Seasons.'
Chorus, 'Awake the harp' 'Creation.'
6. Finale Extemporeous.

In regard to the extemporeous numbers, I learn from the eldest Miss Walker—an organ pupil of Goss, and now in her eighty-sixth year—that Adams, instead of practising before a recital, made use of his improvisations for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the details of the instrument. This explains the presence of four such items.

On behalf of the players of the last generation, it should be said that their neglect of English organ music was due largely to the fact that most of the older works existed only in manuscript, scattered about in organ lofts and museums, while much of the later organ music was included in harpsichord books, being often written indifferently for either instrument. It is only during the past few years that we have been able to make anything like a fairly complete survey of the work of our native early organ writers. While a few pieces, notably some of Samuel Wesley, have been accessible in various collections for some time, the only systematic attempt to place this old music within our reach is the series known as 'Old English organ music.'*

There are two ways of undertaking a work of this kind. One is to publish the works simply as a contribution to the antiquarian and historical side of the art, giving us the dry bones, so to speak. The other is to treat them as music still possessing a claim to be considered from an artistic point of view. The latter method involves the adaptation to the modern organ, alternative suggestions in the doubtful passages that inevitably occur in old manuscripts, and the occasional filling in of what was often a skeleton obviously intended to be clothed by the performer in much the same way as he would harmonize a figured bass. The second of these two plans was the one adopted, and the responsible task of editing was undertaken by Mr. John E. West. So far thirty-six numbers have been published, and the collection is one that should interest every English organist. The period covered is from the middle of the 16th century to the middle of the 19th—the term 'old English' being thus more elastic than is its wont. The past seventy years, however, have seen such strides in every department of the organ and its music that we do not feel the adjective to be inappropriate.

Though the main object of this article is to draw attention to certain numbers that claim consideration

as music quite apart from antiquarian, patriotic, or sentimental reasons, the historical side of the series is too interesting and important to be passed over. For this reason one looks with special curiosity at two 16th-century pieces (No. 24). Richard Alwood, the composer of the first, appears to have been a priest-organist, and to have flourished in the middle of the 16th century. The dates of his birth and death are unknown. He left, amongst other MS. works, seven organ pieces. John Redford, who wrote the second, is better known to us, mainly by virtue of the famous anthem which some present-day historians would have us believe was written by someone else. Both these pieces are vocal rather than instrumental in style, but in spite of their antiquity they are not displeasing, being moreover so dignified and devotional that they well deserve use for preludial purposes. A notable advance, both in subject and treatment, is found in three 17th-century pieces (No. 14)—a Voluntary by Orlando Gibbons, a Voluntary for a double-organ* by Matthew Lock, and a Toccata by John Blow. The Gibbons piece, while showing the composer to have four voices rather than a keyboard at the back of his mind, 'hangs together' so well, and shows so much of Gibbons's power, that it is well worthy of performance. It is an ideal in-voluntary.

Both the Lock and Blow pieces make effective use of contrasted manuals, and show the composer to have entirely shaken off the choral tradition. The Lock Voluntary is an interesting attempt at a double fugue. After a couple of pages, however, both subjects disappear, and the remaining two pages deal with new matter. Much the same thing happens in the Blow Toccata, which sets out with the apparent intention of conducting itself as a respectable fugue. It soon goes the way of other instrumental music of the period, however, though there is a hint of the opening subject at the end of page 11. The final page gives us some harmony that probably brought on Blow's head denunciations as a 'futurist,' and there is a remarkably effective dominant pedal. These three pieces, apart from their interest as showing a great advance in appreciating the possibilities of the instrument, contain music that in spite of some structural looseness may still be listened to with pleasure. Other than antiquarian ears will appreciate the sweet gravity of much of this music, *e.g.*, from Lock :

Ex. 2.

The two Voluntaries by Orlando Gibbons (No. 31) show the composer using an idiom more instrumental than in the piece published in No. 14, though he is here too discursive to be quite satisfactory, and his passage-work, like most of that of his contemporaries, gives us considerably less wool than cry. The two pieces are interesting as a landmark, and contain

* Novello & Co.

* Two-manual.

some curious rhythmical experiments, notably this hiccupping bass:



Dr. John Bull is represented by two pieces (No. 25), a solid and still effective treatment of a fragment of the plainsong 'Vexilla Regis,' and a Fantasia on a Flemish Chorale. The latter piece is one of the results of his holding office at Antwerp Cathedral, during which time he hobnobbed with that other virtuoso, Sweelinck. The work has a twofold interest, as a very early specimen of a choral prelude, and also by reason of its almost certainly being the first organ music by an Englishman to contain guides as to registration—the indications 'Cornet,' 'Cromhoren' (the Krummhorn of to-day), 'Cornet Aleen,' and 'Voll-register' being written in red ink.

The verse in C major of Dr. John Blow (No. 35) consists of a prelude in which continuity and interest are well maintained by means of suspensions (and in which the composer anticipates the free-and-easy methods of Handel by borrowing the first eighteen bars from a Toccata by Frescobaldi!), and a fugue wherein we say good-bye to the subject half-way on the journey, according to the custom of the period. Blow sticks much more closely to the matter in hand in his Voluntary in D minor, 'For ye single organ' (No. 34), this being a well-worked-out fugue on a chromatic subject. Both in its treatment of the subject and in its episodes this work shows Blow to have been a composer in advance of his time. His pupil, Henry Purcell, is represented by two pieces (No. 16), the first being too vague and loose in construction to interest a modern ear, which however often listens to less satisfactory organ music than the second—a Voluntary on the 'Old Hundredth' psalm tune. This, thanks to some judicious filling-in by the editor, is well worth playing to-day. We find Lock again represented in the second set of three 17th-century pieces (No. 20) by a Voluntary in F—a well-knit little piece in form of Introduction and Fughetta—and a Toccata in which the grave organ style of the commencement is forsaken at the end for some passage-work more suggestive of the harpsichord. As the piece occurs in a 'Choice collection of lessons for the harpsichord or organ of all sorts,' after the accommodating manner of the time, this is not surprising. The other piece in this set is of special interest as being an example of an anthem prelude. It is by Edward Gibbons, Orlando's elder brother, and the manuscript bears Dr. Tudway's superscription, 'A Prelude upon ye organ as was then usual before ye Anthem.' It appears before Gibbons's 'How hath the city sate solitary,' but the prelude has no thematic connection with the anthem.

A set of Five short pieces (No. 27) is one of the most interesting and useful of the series, containing a little Prelude by Benjamin Rogers, an effective Largo by Samuel Wesley (an extract from a longer work), a charming Andante pastorale by Thomas Adams, a vigorous Finale by William Hine (1687-1730), and, best of all, an Allegro moderato by Thomas Roseingrave. Looked at apart from its date, this last is good organ music, full of interest and vitality. When we consider that its composer was born about 1685, we may go further and call it remarkable. The following quotation, showing an entry of the subject in the bass, will give some idea of its vigour and fluency:



Roseingrave appears to have been a man of exceptional ability. He profited by study abroad, having been sent to Italy by the Dean and Chapter of St. Patrick's, Dublin, who ordered 'yt tenne guineas be by the Proctor of the said Canonry given him as a gift from the said Canonry towards bearing his charges.' He got good value for his 'tenne guineas,' spending a long time in admiring companionship of the Scarlattis. He left some twenty other works for organ or harpsichord, and if any of them are as good as this specimen of his work, they should be published.

Of other composers born before 1700 we find represented William Croft and Maurice Greene. Croft's Voluntary in D major is a capital Fugue on two subjects, containing nothing startling, but good wholesome work. The Greene specimen is even better. An impressive Largo in C minor leads to a vigorous Allegro in the same key,—a movement so good and attractive that, looking at it, one regrets that our players when performing music of that period seem to find nothing else but the Concertos of Handel—works in which, except for a few movements, we find the great man so far below his best. This Allegro of Greene, together with other contemporary English works to be considered hereafter, might quite well relieve the 'Cuckoo and Nightingale' and similar strains, never very fresh and long since threadbare. But there is a snobbishness in art, as in other things, and it must be confessed that such names as Handel, Buxtehude, and Pachelbel look better on a programme than curt and homely Greene, Blow, Bull, or Lock. Such composers are the highly-estimable poor relations of music, for whom we have intense admiration in the abstract and cold shoulder in the concrete. In the works of the industrious and unknown Elizabethan who wrote 'Romeo and Juliet,' there is no bigger blunder than that implied in the question, 'What's in a name?' A merely limited acquaintance with our profession would have shown him that in music the name often matters more than the notes.

(To be continued.)

An important addition to our knowledge of the history of hymnology appears in Reeves's latest catalogue of old music. The melody which in England is sung to the 'Easter hymn' has hitherto been traced back only to 1708, when it appears in the 'Lyra Davidica,' a collection foreign rather than English in sentiment. But now a volume is offered for sale, published at Bassa, in the Engadine, dated 1684, containing hymns and poems in the Romansch language of the Alps. Among them is a hymn for Ascension Day, with the tune in question. This discovery suggests a new source for melodies of uncertain origin.

The committee of the Nonconformist Choir Union offer a prize of five guineas for the best new anthem by a Free Church musician. Particulars are obtainable from the secretary, Mr. Arthur Berridge, 24, Wallingford Avenue, London, W.

Mr. Edgar Redgrave Doward, who was born at Worcester in 1850, and has been an organist since 1862, went in 1870 to Canada, where, after occupying several posts, he became organist of St. Stephen's, Toronto, in 1902. At the choirboys' annual concert on May 8, he was the recipient of a generous presentation that provides a trip for himself and Mrs. Doward to his birthplace.

We again put on record a remarkable recital of Russian sacred *a cappella* music, given by the Æolian Choir of Brooklyn. The recital took place at All Saints' Church on May 27, under the direction of Mr. N. Lindsay Norton. The newly-introduced works, which were sung to English texts, were the following:

Cherubim Song (five-part)	<i>Bortnyansky</i>
O Gladsome Light (five-part)	<i>Arkhangel'sky</i>
Easter Verses (eight-part)	<i>Smo'ensky</i>
'Salvation is created' (eight-part)	<i>Tschesnokov</i>
'The thief on the cross' (eight-part)	<i>Tschesnokov</i>
Cherubim Song (eight-part)	<i>Musitchesky</i>
Mercy of Peace; Sanctus (four-part)	<i>Kastalsky</i>
Cherubim Song (six-part)	<i>Smirnov</i>

The twenty-eighth annual Festival of the Exeter Diocesan Choral Association, on June 10, engaged, according to the triennial rote, choirs from the Barnstable, Okehampton, and Exeter Archdeacons. They produced a total number of 715 singers. The anthem was Turle's 'This is the day which the Lord hath made.' Dr. D. J. Wood was at the organ, and the sub-conductors were Messrs. Sydney Harper, father and son.

A northern newspaper announced recently that the service-music at Lincoln Cathedral on a certain date would be 'Matins in F.' A new composer!

ORGAN RECITALS.

- Mr. Albert Orton, Walton Parish Church, Liverpool—Fifth Sonata, *Mendelssohn*.
 Mr. C. E. Blyton Dobson, Central Mission, Halifax Place, Nottingham—Theme with variations, *Faulkes*.
 Mr. W. D. Armstrong, First Baptist Church, Marion, Illinois—Prelude and Fugue in E minor, *Bach*.
 Mr. Sydney H. Weale, Hamilton Road Methodist Church, Bangor, Co. Down—Symphony in E minor, *Holloway*.
 Mr. S. Wallbank, St. Paul's Church, King's Cross—Requiem *Æternam*, *Harwood*.
 Mr. Fred Gostelow, St. Stephen's, Walbrook—Choral Prelude in A minor, *César Franck*.
 Dr. M. J. Monk, Truro Cathedral—Prelude and Fugue in C, *Krebs*.
 Dr. Caradog Roberts, English Congregational Church, Penmaenmawr (opening of new organ)—Fugue in D, *Guilmant*.
 Mr. George F. Robertson, Llangollen Parish Church—Prelude and Fugue in A minor, *Bach*.
 Mr. S. M. Popplestone, Redland Park Church, Bristol—First Sonata, *Mendelssohn*.
 Mr. H. Egbert Lane, St. Catherine's, Feltham—Epilogue, *Healey Willan*.
 Mr. W. A. Roberts, St. Paul's, Princes Park, Liverpool—Ballade in D flat major, *Pollitt*.
 Mr. C. E. Juleff, Baptist Church, Burnham (Somerset)—Postlude and Fugue on 'We love the place, O God,' *Juleff*.
 Mr. Claude A. Forster, St. John's Episcopal Church, Forres—Triumphal March, *Dudley Buck*.
 Mr. T. W. Hanforth, Sheffield Cathedral—Prelude and Fugue in D major, *Bach*.
 Mr. H. Whalley, Usher Hall, Edinburgh—Fantasia and Fugue, *Best*.
 Mr. Herbert Hodge, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey—Legend, Op. 16, *Harvey Grace*.
 Dr. Orlando A. Mansfield, Wilson College, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania—First Sonata da Camera, *A. L. Peace*.
 Mr. Lionel Ladbrooke, All Saints' Church, Southampton—Choral Prelude 'Ein feste Burg,' *Bach*.
 Mr. H. C. L. Stocks, Parish Church, Crewkerne—Requiem *Æternam*, *Harwood*.
 Mr. H. Scott-Baker, All Saints', Woodham, Woking—Fantasia-Sonata, Op. 65, *Rheinberger*.

- Mr. Jesse A. Longfield, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Victoria, B.C.—Grand Cheur alla Handel, *Faulkes*.
 Mr. Charles F. Nidd, Methodist Church, Cranbrook, B.C.—Second Sonata, *Mendelssohn*.
 Mr. Charles G. Lee, St. Luke's Church, Headless Cross, Redditch—March on a theme by Handel, *Guilmant*.
 Mr. Allan Brown, Crystal Palace—Finale in B flat, *Wolstenholme*.

APPOINTMENTS.

- Mr. Norman C. Crichton, organist and choirmaster, Thornton Hall, Hull.
 Mr. Cyril Edward Cyphus, organist and choirmaster, Sidestrand Parish Church, Cromer.
 Mr. Ernest S. Holland, choirmaster, St. Margaret's, Thornbury, Bradford.
 Mr. Ernest M. Palser, organist and choirmaster, St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Soho.
 Mr. Ernest J. Turner, organist and choirmaster, Dale Street Wesleyan Church, Leamington Spa.

Reviews.

The teaching and accompaniment of plainsong. By Francis Burgess. [Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Mr. Burgess bases his book on two lectures delivered by him at the Royal College of Organists in 1912. Though the book, like the lectures, is addressed to the trained musician, and deals with a highly technical subject, the writer's style is so lucid that the layman may read without feeling out of his depth. In brief space a great deal of ground is covered. The very debatable question of the origin of plainsong gives Mr. Burgess an opportunity for upsetting some popular misconceptions. The notation of plainsong—so forbidding at first view—is shown to be after all no very difficult or mysterious matter. Rhythm—as the author says, the most important point of all—is dealt with very fully. Particularly useful are the remarks on the treatment of neums, and those who regard these ornamentations as meaningless successions of notes, and sing them accordingly, will find food for thought on pages 23-26. The psalmodic side of plainsong is perhaps that with which most choir-masters are concerned, and Mr. Burgess is a safe guide here. Those in charge of choirs should note well the dictum: 'The one way in which plainsong cannot be taught is by playing it over; it is so intensely vocal that it must be taught by someone who has at least a choirmaster's voice,'—the 'at least' being a shrewd thrust at a branch of the musical profession notorious for its vocal inefficiency. On the vexed question of plainsong accompaniment, Mr. Burgess gives good advice, helped out by examples of harmonies to psalm-tones, hymn-tunes, and a Kyrie from the Ordinary of the Mass. Purists, however, will part company with him when he says that 'we can actually secure everything that is meant by the term "modal accompaniment"' by limiting the materials of our harmonies to the notes of the diatonic scale with the flat seventh as an additional note, and this simple household prescription will enormously simplify the mental labour involved in harmonizing the plainsong melodies when they are transposed either up or down to suit a particular set of voices.' But if, as is generally agreed, each mode has its characteristic colour, this diatonic 'short cut' is only less of a misfit than chromatic harmony. For example, the well-known third mode melody 'Pange lingua' may be harmonized throughout in the key of C. This would be diatonic, but the Phrygian flavour would be absent, and the situation is not saved by the simple expedient (suggested by Mr. Burgess) of treating the final note correctly. Most plainsongists, we fancy, will hardly grant Mr. Burgess his premises that 'in themselves the modes possess no harmonic significance whatever, and no sense of individual atmosphere,' setting against it Dr. Terry's dictum that 'each mode has its own distinctive tonality . . . it ought never to be possible for the listener to be in doubt as to the mode of the piece being played.' Bating this point, Mr. Burgess's book will be found of great use to the student of a branch of music fascinating in itself, and destined again to take an important part in the services of the Church.