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THE BICENTENARY OF ISAAC WATTS, 1948

By the Editor

(including a review of *Isaac Watts*, by Arthur Paul Davis)

It will perhaps be not out of place for us to include in this issue of the *Bulletin* a summary of the chief events which have taken place in this country in connection with the celebration of Watts's bicentenary. Our record cannot be exhaustive, but we hope that it will prove valuable not only to our readers but also to readers of succeeding generations. One member, indeed, has been good enough to suggest that some of this record may be of value in the preparations for the Tercentenary!

By way of prologue, then, we may remember the Hymn Society's own celebration at Oxford in July, which was reviewed in detail in our last issue. It will be remembered that lectures were given and a public hymn-singing held in honour of Watts. Perhaps for the sake of completeness we may give a list of the hymns and tunes we sang on that occasion (12th July, 1948):—

“From all that dwell beneath the skies.”

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN.

“I'm not ashamed to own my Lord.”

Tune: MARTYRDOM.

“There is a land of pure delight.”

Tune: MENDIP.

“When I survey the wondrous cross.”

Tune: ROCKINGHAM.

"Nature with open volume stands (III.10).¹

Tune : ELTHAM (Harmonia Perfecta, 1730).

"Join all the glorious names."

Tune : CROFT'S 136TH.

"Give me the wings of faith."

Tune : BYZANTIUM or JACKSON.

"Behold the glories of the Lamb" (I.1)

Tune : ST. STEPHEN.

"Our God, our help in ages past."

Tune : ST. ANNE.

A tenth hymn, "Awake, our souls," to KENT (DEVONSHIRE) was on the sheet, but lack of time prevented its being sung.

BROADCASTING.

We hope it is not presumptuous to say that this event had nation-wide consequences. At any rate, the Editor was greatly gratified to receive an invitation from the B.B.C. to prepare the material for a hymn-singing half hour in the Third Programme. Since the B.B.C. was also arranging a "Sunday half-hour" of the normal kind for the same week, the Editor was instructed to make his material of the best kind of historical interest. The Editor, fortunately, has a good neighbour, our Chairman, Mr. Frost, and it was with Mr. Frost's indispensable help and under his generous supervision that the list of hymns was compiled and the material for the commentator's script marshalled. And so on 24th November we gathered once again in Mansfield College Chapel under the conductorship of Dr. Stanton to sing the following hymns:—

"Join all the glorious names" (four verses).

Tune : CROFT'S 136TH (1709).

"Behold the glories of the Lamb" (verses 1, 6, 7, 8).

Tune : YORK (1615).

(One verse of this was "lined out" according to early 18th century practice).

"How pleas'd and bless'd was I" (verses 1, 3, 4).

Tune : CHICHESTER², from Bishop, "A Set of New Psalm Tunes," c. 1700.

Psalm XXV, Part 3 (verses 1, 2, 3, 7, 8).

Tune : BELLA², from B. Rogers, "New and Easie Method," 1685.

"Alas, and did my Saviour bleed (II.9, verses 1, 3, 4, 5, 6).

Tune : WALSALL (1721).

(Here we gave a little ground to modern convention and in verse 1 read "one" for "worm").

Psalm CXLVIII, 1st version (verses 1, 3, 8, 10).

Tune : BATH, from Bishop, *op. cit.*

¹ References in this form are to Watts's complete "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," 1707.

² A bad and bowdlerized version of BELLA appears at No. 60 in the Historical A.M.

"Our God, our help in ages past" (six verses as in most hymnals).

Tune : ST. ANNE (1708).

It will be observed that all these tunes were contemporary with Watts. The two we have marked with an asterisk are actually marked for use with these words in the first edition of Watts's Psalms and Hymns (1720), which supplies tunes.

YORK was chosen because it was the most popular psalm-tune at the time when Watts's first hymn was written, and may well have been the tune to which it was sung the Sunday after he wrote it in answer to his father's challenge.

BATH is marked in Bishop for the 148th Psalm, but of course this was not in the first instance Watts's version but probably Tate and Brady's (1696). However, it was not an inappropriate tune for Watts's stirring version. In this adventure we were led by the Bodley singers, who relieved the congregational singing with an occasional unaccompanied verse and gave us the tenor-melody originals of the Bishop and Rogers tunes. The commentary was spoken by Dr. John Marsh, and the college organist (who is the Editor) accompanied on the 60-year-old organ. Perhaps we may have established that the tunes which we had resurrected from Bishop and Rogers, and which appear in no contemporary hymnals¹, are not entirely unworthy of the attention of future editors.

The B.B.C., we say with full emphasis, served the Christian public admirably in this celebration, for it allowed us three other broadcasts beside that which has just been described, totalling one hour and 35 minutes of broadcasting time in eight days. We feel that this was handsome treatment, and are grateful for it. On Sunday, November 21st, an interesting talk was given in the Third Programme by Horace Thorogood on Watts's associations with Stoke Newington. On Wednesday the 24th our own joint chairman, the Rev. K. L. Parry, gave a full-dress talk in the same Programme on Watts as a representative of Puritan piety and of 18th century dissent, as well as discussing his contribution to hymnody. Our broadcast from Mansfield followed on the 25th, the actual anniversary, and on Sunday, the 28th we had a "Sunday half-hour" from Isaac Watts's birthplace, Southampton.

Southampton rose excellently to the occasion. Watts's home church, Above Bar Congregational Church, is still in ruins as a result of the war, but the Congregationalists of the town went to work with a will, and have aroused interest in the celebrations on a fully civic scale. Much of the spade-work for this was done by the Rev. H. I. Firth, the Secretary of the Hampshire Congregational Union, and under his supervision an excellent pamphlet on Watts was produced for the occasion, containing a good biography of Watts and full details of the local celebrations. The programme of

¹A bad and bowdlerized version of BELLA appears at No. 60 in the Historical A.M.

hymns broadcast from the Guildhall was as follows :—

"When I survey the wondrous cross."

Tune : ROCKINGHAM.

"Come, let us join our cheerful songs."

Tune : NATIVITY (A.M. 299).

"There is a land of pure delight."

Tune : BEULAH (A.M. 536).

"Jesus shall reign."

Tune : TRURO.

"Awake, our souls, away our fears."

Tune : SAMSON (S.P. 451).

"Our God, our help in ages past."

Tune : ST. ANNE.

"Before Jehovah's awful throne."

Tune : OLD HUNDREDTH.

"Give me the wings of faith."

Tune : CRUCIS VICTORIA (A.M. 623).

An admirable selection, well contrasted, and sung to excellent tunes. In three hymns it will be observed that nineteenth century tunes were used, and each of these showed the nineteenth century at its best; perhaps none of the three is musically the purest of the settings of the words to be found in our hymnals (we may compare NATIVITY with ST. FULBERT or LONDON NEW, BEULAH with MENDIP, and CRUCIS VICTORIA with SONG 67) but each makes out a good case against its sterner competitor. We may observe in passing, indeed, how very few of Watts's hymns have become wedded to bad or unsuitable tunes even in our less scrupulous hymnals. This programme was heartily sung, with perhaps too little variation of *tempo* between one tune and another. ST. ANNE was, we thought, too fast and in too high a key (D major), and TRURO was a breathless gallop. We also feel that it was an aesthetic error to repeat "When I survey" at the end. But these were small matters. We congratulate Southampton on its celebrations. The team in charge of this broadcast were the Rev. D. Marlais Davies (commentator), D. Cecil Williams (conductor) and B. T. Tanner (organist).

THE CHURCHES.

Churches of all the Protestant denominations have joined in the singing of cheerful songs. On the anniversary-day itself, 25th November, a service of commemoration was held in St. Paul's Cathedral, arranged jointly by the Free Church Federal Council and the Cathedral authorities. Addresses were given by Canon Adam Fox and Dr. Albert Peel, neither of whom require introduction to members of this Society. On Friday, 19th November, the London Free Church Federal Council organised a celebration at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, at which the speakers were Drs. Geoffrey Nuttall and Henry Bett.

Local celebrations have been held in many districts, and have been the occasion usually of a joint act of witness by local free

churches, and often of joint action between Free Churchmen and Anglicans. Thus has Isaac Watts continued the hymn-writer's greatest work, that of drawing together Christians of different communions.

THE PRESS.

Perhaps the most impressive evidence, however, of Watts's impact upon the English-speaking world has been the attention paid to him by the English press. Few of our leading journals were without some special editorial reference to the bicentenary of his death. We should expect from *The Times* a leading article, although we might not necessarily expect so excellent a leader as it did in fact provide. It was the unanimity of the press in regarding Watts as important that cheered us.

LITERATURE.

A good deal of writing on a small scale has been occasioned by this event in the shape of articles for the religious press. We may mention Sir Norman Birkett's admirable article in the *British Weekly* for 11th November, in which we quarrel only with a commendation of RIMINGTON. The Editor was asked to write in a similar way for the *Christian World* of the same date. Earlier in the year K. L. Parry wrote a weighty paper on Watts for the Congregational Historical Society, which appears in that Society's *Transactions*. Numerous other such papers, articles, and lectures have been written and delivered up and down the country. We would especially mention a children's celebration, using the technique of dialogue, which has been written by Eric Shave, and published by the Independent Press; we can recommend it with confidence as a tasteful and well-conceived act of worship for young people.

But the most momentous of these events is unquestionably the publication of a new biography of Watts by the Independent Press.¹ This book was published in the United States in 1943, and its appearance in this country last October was most timely. It can be recommended unhesitatingly as an admirable, indeed an indispensable work. Watts has had four biographers before Mr. Davis, namely Thomas Gibbons (1780), Thomas Milner (1834), Edwin Paxton Hood (1875) and Thomas Wright (1914); of these, the author tells us, only the first two are valuable as documents, so that well over a hundred years have passed since the last full-scale biography was written. Mr. Davis has gained access to a great deal of material, mostly in the form of correspondence, which was not available to his predecessors, and his handling of the material is masterly. A publisher's note draws attention to a slip or two in the text (which has been photographically reproduced from the American edition), but the reader need have no fear of trusting Mr. Davis as an authority. The book deals, of course, with the whole of

¹ *Isaac Watts*, by Arthur Paul Davis, Independent Press, 8/6. Pp. xiv + 306.

Watts's life and activities, and indeed is not in any sense a hymnological work. It has a chapter on Watts's hymns, but this does not set out to be critical. The value of the book to those interested in hymns but not in history is to show how indispensable some historical sense is to any hymnologist; for it shows vividly what manner of man it was who in his early thirties could write "When I survey the wondrous cross" and three hundred other hymns, many of which compete with that one for the highest place. In all his life and work, in his hesitancy about going forth into the ministry, his reluctance to accept the call to Mark Lane, his tendency to preach best when at home; in his outward-looking theology and his overmastering sense of awe; even in his near-Calvinism, his disparagement of earth, his slightly ridiculous children's verses; and certainly in his love of facts and distrust of feelings Watts is seen to be the modest, self-forgetful but God-intoxicated saint of all his generation. Such is the picture which stands out of Mr. Davis's pages, and we are grateful for his great work. One of the most admirable features of the book is the comprehensive bibliography, running to 25 pages. And, if a Congregationalist may be allowed to do so, we congratulate the Independent Press on its enterprise in making this book available to us.

AMERICA.

We must not close these partly documentary and partly critical notes without mention of the activities of the American Hymn Society. We have no very full details to report from, but we would mention a mighty celebration, in typically spacious style, which was held in Fort George Presbyterian Church, New York, on Sunday, 14th November. This consisted of Congregational hymns "Before Jehovah's awful throne," "Come we that love the Lord," "Lord of the worlds above," "The Heavens declare thy glory," "Our God, our help," "Awake, our souls," and "Jesus shall reign") and of several choral numbers, as well as an address by the Rev. E. N. West, and several musical items. Contributions from England were used in the form of settings and descants written by Martin Shaw, Eric Thiman, Vaughan-Williams, and Mrs. S. A. Winchester. A prayer specially written by Canon Briggs was used, and greetings from this Society were read by the personal representative of the British Consul-General in New York. Twelve choirs took part, and the organiser of the festival, Mr. George Litch Knight, wrote after the event to say that it had been a most moving occasion.

CONCLUSION.

It may be said, then, that Isaac Watts has been justly and proudly celebrated by our Protestant churches, and that the world at large has not been allowed to ignore him. Christians, in commemorating him, have sung their faith with joy. We thank God, now and constantly, for Isaac Watts.

VICTORIAN HYMN-COMPOSERS—II

JOHN BACCHUS DYKES

(Concluded from Vol. II, No. 3)

By the Editor

4. This lack of staying-power in Dykes, which made it necessary to call in these choralistic aids, shows itself in another fashion. We have seen clearly that Dykes had a great feeling for words. He was perhaps the first hymn-composer to attempt to write tunes that would represent the feeling of certain words and be uniquely appropriate to them. He wrote his tunes as a modern song-writer would write a setting of "Who is Sylvia?"; but of course he overdid it. He was unusually good at setting a first line to music; but when he observed a hymn like "I heard the voice of Jesus say" or "Christian dost thou see them?" he saw a chance to develop this gift much further. It did not escape his sensitive eye that these hymns have a "pattern" to which all the verses conform, a pattern sometimes of question and answer. His choral instinct therefore runs away with him, and, forgetting that a hymn-tune has to be sung several times in immediate succession, he presents us in these cases with a tune which brings us up at the half-way line with a dramatic shock like a pistol-shot. We are swung away into a new key and a new rhythm; we are favoured with many expression-marks and guides to histrionics; and everything is supposed to have a happy ending.

But tunes like *VOX DILECTI* (257)¹, *COME UNTO ME* (256), *ST. ANDREW OF CRETE* (91) and *BEHOLD THE LAMB* (187), dramatic though they are and laudable in their intention of faithful setting of the words, show ignorance of an important musical principle. We should now judge it the most superficial and incompetent musicianship to hold that the way to set a "question" and "answer" verse is by writing a tune of which one half says one thing in the minor key and the other half something quite different in the major. In the three minor-major tunes mentioned above (91, 187, 256), the second half has no connection whatever with the first; it makes as clean a break as may be. The theological implications of so setting a hymn such as "I heard the voice," which is supposed to represent the response to the Christian Gospel, are not a little alarming. What is required is, of course, a continuous tune of which the second half answers the first. We need not an artificial, but a natural division at half-way. Not all tunes are this shape; but many are, and what is required is to find one of these, not to invent a mass of wild gestures which obscure the words altogether by their extravagance.

Now here we can say a good word for the *English Hymnal*. *KINGSFOLD* is exactly the right tune for "I heard the voice"; by the simple device of inverting the opening phrase at the half-way line it introduces just that shaft of light which it required to mark

¹ References without initials are to *Hymns A. & M.* (1916).

the introduction of the "answer." But it is all one tune, and indeed its tendency to monotony gives the slightly sentimental words a strength they cannot hope to gain from Dykes. Again, and for the same reason, GUTE BAUMEN is the tune for "Christian, dost thou see them?" If ever a second half solidly and boldly answered a first half it is done here. There is no need for a change of key and a new start. The story that the hymn tells is one story, and the story that the tune tells should be one also. As for Dykes' setting of "Behold, the Lamb," it is a non-starter; the melody never had much strength, and what it has never recovers from the change of key. Nor is any of this necessary for this particular hymn. S. S. Wesley, of course, has the last word on this with his magnificent tune WIGAN (O.H. 140).

5. One of the besetting sins of Victorian composers was chromaticism; oddly enough we do not find as much of this in Dykes as might have been expected. For really lurid chromaticisms one turns to the underworld of nonconformist hymnody, the very knowledge of which may well be spared most of our readers. Once or twice, however, Dykes gives himself rein in this direction, and the result is spectacular enough. SANCTUARY (436) combines a monotonous and meaningless melody with intolerable harmonic slides. We will leave it with Martin Shaw's epithet—"hysterically sensational." Dykes's own version of STRENGTH AND STAY (12) is sadly marred by this kind of bad harmony; the cleaned-up version in the 1904 edition of *A. & M.* is far better. PAX DEI (31) suffered from the same trouble and was similarly overhauled by the zealots of 1904 with some success; but it is not in any case a very good melody. A little touch of pure vulgarity is to be found in the original version of DERRY (416), where in the first chord of the third line the alto sings two crotchets—C followed by C sharp. This is preserved in that museum of late Victorian indiscretions, the *Congregational Hymnary*; but it seems that on this point the editors of *A. & M.* had their way.

In a deeper stratum of the musical texture chromaticism means modulation; Dykes confined himself to one or two daring and very unhappy experiments. Two tunes in *A. & M.*, OLIVET (149) and CHARITAS (367) show attempts at modulation, but in each case the melody is irretrievably ruined. It is almost impossible to avoid shipwreck of melody when modulation is attempted in this short compass, but Canon Ferguson in his WOLVERCOTE (RvCH 508) has shown that it can be done.

6. One or two other evidences of Dykes' technique can be briefly mentioned. Suspensions of the Mendelssohnian kind are not uncommon—there is a horrid one in LUX BENIGNA at the end. In HORBURY (277) there is an equally unpleasing anticipation at the end of line 4 (once again dusted away in 1904). Then there is the meandering or key-bound melody of which ST. SYLVESTER (289) is such a lamentable example, and STABAT MATER (117) another. ST. BEES has far too many A flats to be healthy. ST. MARY MAGDALENE

(CoH 472) is equally monotonous and dreary. The false theory on which these tunes are worked out is that to express serenity a monotonous melody is required. DOWN AMPNEY is sufficient evidence to the contrary.

An irritating habit to which many of Dykes's colleagues were even more prone than he was himself is that of drawing out the end of a tune in notes of double value. PARADISE (234), VOX ANGELICA (223), and REQUIESCAT (401), all very bad tunes, show this tendency with a consistency that suggests that Dykes associated this kind of slowing-down of everything with heaven—another shaky piece of theology.

Finally we ought to mention that like everyone else Dykes is capable of being just dull and lifeless. TRINITY COLLEGE (483) seems to have no point of interest whatever, and the same could be said of ST. WINIFRED (233 in the 1904 edition). It would be a pity to multiply examples of this trait, which is the most common of all in composers of every age.

Summing up thus far, then, we have observed in many of Dykes's tunes the endemic weaknesses of his age, and we have seen in how many cases a tune that might have been excellent was spoiled by the unresisted intrusion of the conventions of the day. Dykes was perfectly capable of writing a serviceable tune (such as HOLLINGSIDE, 193, ST. CROSS, 114, FIRST FRUITS, 385) and could occasionally write a really good tune DOMINUS REGIT ME, 197, or LUX VERA, 687 (a practically unknown but excellent tune which editors ought not to overlook when confronted by a hymn in this unusual metre). He could be over-emotional (VOX DILECTI, 257), but he was comparatively rarely pretentious (223). He could be too sweet and polite for words (RIEVAULX, 164), and he could be cheap and shoddy (COME UNTO ME, 256: SALVETE FLORES, 68, IN TENEBRIS, 28). He could over-reach himself and lose his way (CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR, 254; CHARITAS, 367). But in all his ways he was the cultured gentleman who prefers not to commit himself very completely in any direction, and therefore practically all his work gives the same impression of something that might have been good but has only succeeded in being creditable. He was non-committal, I say, almost always; but on two occasions he was not. On one of these he committed himself to the most painful "gaffe" to be found in all the pages of *A. & M.*, and on the other he committed himself to immortality.

DIES IRAE (398) is his most considerable composition in point of length in *A. & M.* One doubts whether it is ever sung now or has been these thirty years; but there it is and it cannot pass unnoticed. Confronted with the problem of setting a hymn of 57 lines Dykes decided properly that an ordinary hymn-tune was inappropriate and embarked on an extended setting. The opening part of the hymn consists of seven six-line verses sung to a tune that shares its first phrase with "Men of Harlech" and manages within its brief compass to give excellent examples of repetition and chromaticism, and

to include the usual elongated ending which was Dykes's eschatological *motif*. It would be a pity to yield to the temptation to give a running commentary on this astonishing indiscretion. We may only point to the wild and almost gloating rapture of "Doom'd to flames of wrath," and to the musical nonsense of the succeeding line, which modulates casually from D minor to G major, involving the choir in a succession of contradicted accidentals which would no doubt require months of rehearsal, but that one does not have months' notice of the occasion for this hymn. The last few lines of the tune are too trite and trifling to bear comment; it is truly dreadful, full of the kind of histrionics which can never be more grotesquely out of place than at a funeral. When all is said, it is better to sing the *Dies Irae* to plainsong — and easier — than to attempt this ghoulish little trifle.

We mention this to show what Dykes was capable of. But we may not end there, for Dykes shows himself by one tune capable of immortality. *NICAËA* (160) is a great and majestic tune, and part of the heritage of catholic hymnody so long as there shall remain a man on the earth to sing. It is Dykes' one piece of perfection. It is, for example, one of the few tunes of his that are effective at whatever speed they are sung; it is probably the only one that can be really effective with a large congregation. Sung slowly and massively (but without those pauses which *E.H.* capriciously inserts) it can be most moving, yet it is personal and sympathetic enough to stand performance in the smallest gathering. We have mentioned already how Dykes achieved popularity by drawing on the common coin of Victorian musical idiom. In *NICAËA* he achieves immortality by drawing on the common coin of universal hymnody. It has been pointed out that the first and last phrases of the tune are identical with the first and last phrases of *WACHET AUF*; which view has the corollary that very little of this tune is Dykes' own composition. But it is equally possible that this tune occurred to Dykes just as it was and without any consciousness of plagiarism or of an older source. No doubt Dykes knew *WACHET AUF*; but we are not prepared to accept without a good deal more evidence the idea that Dykes was in any sense borrowing from *WACHET AUF* for the present purpose. Both phrases in question are elementary developments of the common chord of E major, the one ascending and the other descending; and one could quote dozens of examples where such developments occur in hymn-tunes and in other places, the effect of which would be simply to show that the tunes in question were in the double sense "original," being spontaneous compositions linked up with a common source at a level deeper than the composer's immediate intention.

Whatever the metaphysics of its composition, *NICAËA* is an immortal tune. Nowhere else is Dykes perfect, but here he has said what needs to be said perfectly and (with all possible respect to the composer of the undeniably beautiful *BROMLEY COMMON* in *S.P.*) nothing needs to be added to it.

Dykes rests his claim as a composer, then, on the merit of one tune which we can call perfect, and on the popularity of a score of tunes over most of which we shake our heads. And yet, *de facto*, his claim stands. The ineptitude of many modern alternatives to the tunes of Dykes indicates this at least, that Dykes faced the problem of setting words to appropriate music more successfully than many moderns are able to. It would be meretricious to react in favour of Dykes just because we are growing more critical of *S.P.* than we used to be. But this seems to be a just verdict, that he was a composer who ministered to the need of his age with singular exactness and sympathy; and that if the manner of his ministry be criticised, the nature of the need must also be criticised. We may well admire the sympathy and devotion which brought together this music and this piety. It will be long indeed before the service he rendered the Christian church will be entirely forgotten.

VICTORIAN HYMN-COMPOSERS—III

HENRY JOHN GAUNTLETT, 1805-76

This survey of eminent Victorians in the field of hymn-composition has so far taken us to the Cathedral and the Parish-church of Anglicanism. Here, however, we encounter that weighty if somewhat unreliable influence, the singing Free Church. Gauntlett was, of course, not a Free-Churchman himself. A son of the Vicarage (his father was one of John Newton's successor's at Olney), he held four important organist's posts, of which three were in Anglican churches; but his longest, and from our point of view most important post was that which he held at Union Chapel, Islington, in the time of Dr. Henry Allon.

Union Chapel is a Congregational church in a quarter of London which the mid-Victorian era found at its zenith. It contained opulence and squalor almost side by side; to-day the district is one of the many which tell of past prosperity with the rather gloomy nostalgia of long rows of houses on three floors and a basement. The church, of course, thrives still and remains a great beacon of Christian witness in a none too cheerful area. But now it is a fighting church whereas in those days it was a comfortable church. Dr. Allon, its minister, seized his opportunities, being unwilling to let prosperity degenerate into complacency. He determined to make his people sing. To this end he instituted, with Gauntlett's co-operation, the psalmody-class which became famous and is still remembered with pride in Congregationalism. It was copied in many other places, and it represented nineteenth-century Nonconformist worship very strikingly. Free-Churchmen were always singers; John Calvin himself is seen at his most humane in his Genevan Psalters. But Free-Churchmen always tended to distrust choirs; until comparatively recently the choir in a Free Church has been there simply to lead the singing of the congregation, and scarcely at all to perform on its own. During the last fifty years

this has altered considerably, of course; but in Gauntlett's time it was certainly the rule. The people liked singing, but they wanted to sing themselves, and not to let others do it for them. The heartiness of their singing was an indication of the burly high-spirits that characterised a good deal of their piety. This was not a cosy or restful piety; it was certainly not in the current sense "devotional." It was the rugged piety of the Puritans dressed according to the fashion of the nineteenth century. The Nonconformist Conscience was vociferous and the Nonconformist preaching was lengthy and stirring. There was comparatively little profundity of devotion in the piety of the ordinary worshipper; but he liked a good tough sermon and he venerated the preachers of such sermons in a fashion which we are beginning nowadays to regard as a historical curiosity. It could be said by way of criticism that in all this there was too little of silence, too little of waiting on the Word, too much clamour and heartiness. It was in any event a piety very far removed from that of the Church of England; and the fact that Nonconformity lacked a good deal of respectability and that certain high offices such as University Professorships were denied to nonconformists, tended to add a certain stridency to its proclamations.

This was the atmosphere in which Gauntlett worked. The psalmody-class was a weekly congregational practice. Everybody who could sing a note of music from staff or sol-fa came to it, and there they learnt to sing not only hymns but also anthems in concert. They sang in parts, and no doubt they invented a good deal where they could not follow the composer's convictions; but the performance of a congregational anthem was to them as important a matter as the singing of the hymns. To further this end, Dr. Allon and Dr. Gauntlett collaborated in producing a hymnal known as *The Congregational Psalmist*, upon whose musical and theological interest we are tempted to digress at some length. A companion volume of anthems was soon added, and both passed through several editions. Every member of the psalmody-class had a music-copy, and from this they sang their faith. The 1886 edition of *The Congregational Psalmist* contains 922 hymns and many tunes which put to shame the taste and enterprise of modern Congregationalism. The anthem-book contains some 130 anthems, all set to music of the simple, safe, and unfamiliar kind which so well reflects the piety of the singers.

Now we may point a parallel at once here with the piety which we mentioned in our article on Dykes. Altogether different though this was from the atmosphere of the parish church in the country, Union Chapel and the local anglican church had in common this flight from the unfamiliar. The common speech that we noted in Dykes is here too; a slightly different vocabulary is in use, but the language is the same. Though this piety is strident where that was deprecating, both have the fugitive quality from which no order of Victorian piety (not even, we make bold to say, that of the Salvationist revivalists from America) was exempt.

It is therefore in *The Congregational Psalmist* that the largest selection from the tunes of Gauntlett is to be found; but since this book is unlikely to be in the hands of most of our readers we will not use it for a reference. But from a consideration of his well-known and accessible tunes it will be seen that partly by nature and partly by adoption Gauntlett was the very man to lead the singing at Union Chapel. In his music two tendencies are unmistakeable in chief: first, a tendency towards breadth of melody and plainness of harmony at his best; and second an almost invincible gravitation towards the cheap and tedious. It is truly astonishing how *dull* some of his tunes are. The delicate vulgarities of the worst Dykes are as far from Gauntlett as they are from Martin Shaw. But in his own way he can be quite as satisfying to the destructive modern critic.

We may look first at some of his best examples. These are among the best-known of all hymn-tunes. ST. FULBERT (A.M. 189) is perhaps the best known of all among general congregations. There is nothing original in it, but it is as sound a tune as ever came out of the nineteenth century. ST. ALPHEGE (A.M. 225) is of just the same kind. The melody moves without a break, and the tune is in an unpretentious way quite as good as any tune need be. ST. ALBINUS (A.M. 140) remains the universal tune for "Jesus lives!" because it sets the words in their truncated version admirably. It also exemplifies a freedom of rhythm of which Gauntlett was rather fond. The only thing to regret in this tune is that it has displaced the original version of the hymn in 7.8.7.8.7.7., which has so much more grandeur than the "Alleluia" version, and which sings so magnificently to JESU MEINE ZUVERSICHT. (For the version see *Cong. Hy.* 122, and for the tune *S.P.* 24).

And what child does not know IRBY for "Once in royal David's city"? This tune will come up again for inspection because of a curious quality in it; but on any reckoning it is a justly famous tune. LAUDATE DOMINUM (A.M. 308) is another most felicitous setting, with the same strong melody and purposeful movement as we have already seen. All these five tunes are to be found in *S.P.*, and it is remarkable that in only one (the last-mentioned) have the editors found it necessary even to revise the harmony.

Among his really good tunes we may mention one that is scarcely known at all. We hazard a guess that if he had not called it ST. MAGNUS it would have had a better chance; and that its exclusion from the standard book is by way of being a pedantic protest against his temerity in trespassing on the ground already occupied by the great Jeremiah Clarke. The tune is to be found in *Songs of Zion* (205) and in *Hymns of the Kingdom*, and is one of the best quiet C.M.'s that were written in the nineteenth century.

None of these tunes show the slightest "originality"; there is nothing about them that anyone can call "characteristic." They have not even the "signature" that we can discern in the tunes of Wesley or Dykes. They are just good, sound tunes. But like Dykes's

NICAËA their secret is that they draw on the common coin of universal hymnody, and they immediately endear themselves to congregations, not in the way in which an impressive public figure makes his impact, but in the way that we associate with a humble and unpretentious but thoroughly reliable friend.

Now unpretentiousness and the kindred virtues are among the most difficult to sustain consistently. It is fatally easy for modesty to degenerate into insipidity, and it is this which is the great fault in Gauntlett's bad tunes. He runs to sentimentality seldom and to blatant vulgarity never. But he can produce, and did too often produce, examples whose musical content is practically nil. What can be said of RISEHOLME (A.M. 275); of IN VIAM RECTAM (A.M. 258), of EVERMORE (A.M. 280), or of ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS (391) but that they are just indefensibly dull? Sentimentality creeps in in CRY OF FAITH (A.M. 116), but what defence can there be for so feeble and "tired" a tune as NEWLAND (RvCH 102)? These tunes show nothing so flagrant as chromaticism or violent lapses of taste. But what they do show is precisely the virtue of his better tunes turned sour. In them modesty has indeed become insipidity. Perhaps the best pair of tunes to compare for the purpose of showing how the virtue can so easily fade into the vice is LAUDATE DOMINUM (A.M. 308) and HOUGHTON (RvCH 168). They are in the same metre and the same key and have several phrases in common. And yet whereas LAUDATE DOMINUM is a good melody, with plenty of purpose and no lack of congregational sense, HOUGHTON never rises higher than the second class. Where LAUDATE uses development (e.g. in the first line and the last pair) HOUGHTON uses repetition and sequence. LAUDATE has good harmonic movement, but HOUGHTON gives the impression of being key-tied throughout. LAUDATE is unpretentiously good, HOUGHTON unpretentiously weak.

One of the symptoms of Gauntlett's over-anxiety not to be prominent or pretentious is seen in the harmonic scheme of many of his tunes. It is surprising how many of them give the impression of being key-tied, chiefly because they return at the half-way to the tonic. This is, of course, not to be described as an *a priori* defect in a tune; but it needs careful handling, and it creates a need for an unusually bold melody. (An excellent example of a tune that does this successfully is STRACATHRO; another is FRENCH.) Gauntlett does not usually rise to this need.

Consider one of his more successful tunes in this form—ST. GEORGE (A.M. 58). Its phrases are good, and the octave leap between the first and second lines gives it individuality; but every one of its four lines ends on the tonic chord, and the fact that the melody ends on the mediant does not in any way alter the key-tied impression the tune gives. Few of his tunes have such strong melodic character to recommend them. ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS (A.M. 391), already mentioned with disapproval, brings us back to the tonic at every fourth line. JESHURUN (M. 68), one of his worst tunes, has a full close at half way. TRIUMPH (RvCH 134), still very popular

in the Free Churches, comes to a dead stop two thirds of the way through, making its last two lines inevitably sound like an after-thought. ST. JEROME (Hist. A.M. 432) adds a notably weak melody to a dull harmonic scheme. In fact, in a representative list of 45 of his tunes we have noted 26 that show this early return; of 29 C.M. tunes in major keys, fifteen return to the tonic at half way. This is more than an accident; it amounts to a characteristic tendency, and in Gauntlett's case to a characteristic weakness.

We have so far made no mention of the tunes of Gauntlett's that appear only in the *Congregational Psalmist*. Most of them add nothing to what had already been said, but special mention might be made of a few. ST. THOMAS, his tune to "Just as I am" (298), in F sharp minor, is excellently suited to the words. MORIAH (135) another tune in the minor mode, is well adapted to "All ye that pass by." ECCE AGNUS (138) is his setting of "Behold the Lamb" (compare Wesley's WIGAN and Dykes's BEHOLD THE LAMB); once again in the minor mode, this tune ends rather unexpectedly on the chord of the dominant; but the Amen puts this right. MALDON (475) stands on, or even beyond, the border-line between hymn-tunes and anthems, being a kind of extended chorale in the tradition of some of the more complicated patterns of Bach; it is not ineffective, but it requires a high G of the sopranos at one point, and has one unfortunate chromaticism in the melody. LAMBETH (587) is another not infelicitous essay in the minor mode. ROGATION (285) finds him experimenting unsuccessfully with modulation, and SILSOE (262) is a good example of Gauntlett in his "tired" mood. These tunes of his in the *Congregational Psalmist*, of which there are 35, give a good summary of his qualities, and it may be said that he is at his best when he achieves the unpretentious which is also in the best sense "catholic." When the inspiration leaves him nothing is left; often the very craftsmanship of his music is seen to be lacking in strength.

In conclusion we may mention that tune of his which seems to defy analysis, and seems to exemplify much which we would criticise in Gauntlett, and yet to carry away many well-deserved honours. The tune is IRBY, his incomparable and indivisible setting of "Once in royal David's city." Its melody is known all over the world—and yet there is no more complete example even in his works of the key-bound and unenterprising. Every line comes back to the tonic except one which ends on the mediant. There is no hope, whatever you do with the harmonies, of disguising this. And yet the curve of the melodic phrase itself, the judicious placing of the passing-notes, and the unanalysable but undeniable fact that at this moment the inspiration was upon its composer, make this a tune which none of us could do without. It is essentially intimate and on the small scale; and in the unison version with a very simple accompaniment in E.H. (which follows fairly well Gauntlett's first version) this is the effect given. How different the effect when it is sung as a stately processional at King's College. Here, with the melody moving very

slowly, there is plenty of time for due weight to be given to each note, and for a few touches of harmonic variety which all help the tune to achieve a breadth of which its composer probably never dreamed. (The ingenuity of the harmony and of the movement of the bass in the opening lines should not be missed.)¹ In sum, it is a thoroughly agreeable, unashamedly sentimental tune inseparable from English hymnody; a tune which contains more music than its composer suspected; and one which (unlike most of its contemporaries) can be called sentimental with no intention to insult it. This is the kind of greatness which is occasionally "thrust upon" a composer, that what he has written becomes, through a new interpretation, a means of grace in a way which he never intended but of which he would have been delighted to hear. Something of the same happened to Dykes in the case of NICAËA (see our previous article), which he never heard sung *maestoso* in D major, but which, so interpreted, places him among the immortals.

Like all his contemporaries, Gauntlett wrote many pot-boilers; since he is said to have written in all ten thousand tunes this is not surprising; but at his best he was strong enough to achieve a representation of five tunes in *E.H.* and to carry his tunes into every hymn-book and one, at least, into every home.

CORRIGENDA

1. CRIMOND (Vol. II, No. 3, page 40). Dr. Patrick writes that since the publication of his article he has heard from a completely reliable source that the composer's name was *Jessie* Seymour Irvine, not Isabella as the article states. Her dates are 1836—1887. She was born at Dunothar, where her father was minister before he passed on first to Peterhead and then to Crimond.
2. The *Hymn-tunes of Parry* (II.4.59f). Mr. Finlay writes to correct the second footnote on page 60. The new organ-arrangement of the accompaniment to JERUSALEM was not composed, as we had thought, for the new edition of *A.M.*, but for the new *B.B.C. Hymnal*. It will, however, appear in both books. For this information we are indebted to Canon Lowther-Clarke.

SOCIETY NOTE

The Rev. H. R. MOXLEY has published (December, 1948) a book of 30 of his hymns entitled "*The Coming*" and *other Hymns*. Copies may be obtained from the author, 301 Woodstock Road, Oxford, price two shillings. A notice of the book will appear in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

NOTICE.

Members are reminded that their subscriptions for 1949 are now due, and it will be much appreciated if each member will remit the sum of five shillings to the Treasurer without delay. A printed envelope is enclosed for this purpose.

¹ The version in use at King's College does not appear in any standard hymnal; in any but the most spacious contexts the *S.P.* version is probably the most effective.