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ARTICLE VI.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITALIAN CHURCH MUSIC.¹

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UPON a clear evening not many months ago I found myself for the first time before the world-renowned cathedral of Antwerp. The lonely tower, one of the most exquisite of all the works of human hands, with its apex turned to gold by the touch of the last rays of the setting sun, revealed every detail of its fairy-like tracery sharply cut against the intense blue of the sky. From the lofty recesses of the spire the chimes every few moments sent a waft of melody far out over city and river. The dingy square in which I stood, shut in by buildings as old and gray as the cathedral itself, was almost deserted, and, although in the heart of the crowded city, but faint murmurs of life reached my ears. The haste and clamor of the present had slipped away from me and left me in one of those haunts consecrated to the spirit of the Middle

¹ The following are some of the most valuable sources of information in respect to the subjects treated in the present article: *Geschichte der Musik*, A. W. Ambros; *Geschichte der Musik des 17, 18, und 19 Jahrhunderts*, Wilhelm Langhans; *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, A. von Dommer; *Giovanni Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter*, C. von Winterfeld; *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen Musik*, R. G. Kiesewetter; *Magister Choralis*, F. X. Haberl; *Führer durch den Concertsaal*, II. Abtheilung, Hermann Kretzschmar; *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*, F. J. Fetis; *History of Music*, Emil Naumann; *On Purity in Music*, A. F. Thibaut; *History of the Renaissance in Italy*, vol. i. *The Age of the Despots*, vol. iii. *The Fine Arts*, vol. vi. *The Catholic Reaction*, J. A. Symonds; *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, Charles Burney; *The History of the Popes*, L. von Ranke; *The Life of Mozart*, Otto Jahn; *The Transition Period of Musical History*, John Hullah; *Studies of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, Vernon Lee; *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, articles "Mass," "Schools of Composition," and "Plain Song."

Ages, where poetic and historic associations combine to deepen the spell cast by some miracle of art. As I gazed upward at that amazing shape in which stone seemed robbed of its friableness and obedient like wax to the cunning hand of its artificer, I marvelled not only at the artistic genius that could dream of a thing so beautiful, and the engineering skill that could adjust its multitudinous parts in such flawless proportion and security, but also at the intellectual supremacy of an institution that could bid such structures rise in testimony to its authority over the imaginations and the wills of a continent of men.

As the sunlight faded, the windows of the cathedral began to glow from lights within, now and then a door swung open and strains of music stole out into the silent square. I entered the building and found myself in a vast nave flanked by gigantic columns, which were lost in the shadows of the vaults far above. At the intersection of the nave and transepts stood a lofty altar of snowy white; the broad stairway leading up to the holiest place was carpeted with crimson, and bordered with masses of flowers of gorgeous hues. Enormous candles illuminated the structure. Richly attired priests and attendants passed up and down, and backward and forward, in mysterious evolution and gesture before the radiant sanctuary. Clouds of incense rolled upward, and diffused through the whole edifice their aromatic breath. A crowd of worshippers knelt motionless before the altar and in the shaded spaces between the columns. Beyond the altar was the blackness of night, within which I knew that those sublime paintings in which Rubens has depicted the expiation on Calvary for all time, were hanging with their wings folded across their faces. No light was visible, save the illumination about the altar, which bathed every object near it in mellow splendor, and sent pale gleams along tablets and windows, and flung back the hollows of the vaults and chapels into impenetrable gloom. An invisible choir from the gallery was

chanting some of those solemn Gregorian melodies which are like the echoes of another world, so mystical and awesome are they in their rapt and impersonal expression. At intervals, when the weird voices ceased, the organ sent peals of harmony reverberating through the vast arches. The impression was irresistible. The antiquity of the place, the magnificent architecture, the superb vision of the altar, the magical effects of light and darkness, the floating incense, the surging music, the reverent attitudes of the worshippers, the inevitable suggestions of the history, power, and spiritual domination of the Roman Catholic Church,—all combined to lay a spell upon my mind that subdued it into something like fear. I felt that I could to a certain degree sympathize with the countless earnest souls who had laid their doubts and longings at the feet of the august institution whose wonderful history and spiritual power seemed to them to warrant its tremendous claims.

Such effects, produced by the ingenious combination of some of the most potent influences that act upon the senses and the imagination, have been an essential part of the method of the Roman Catholic Church from the beginning. No subject of study is more fascinating than the sources and the development of her unparalleled sway over the human mind. In accounting for her marvellous career, we must not pause with the terrifying and consoling features of her doctrine, her matchless organization, or the craft, policy, and energy of her priesthood. These have produced amazing results, but the church has not relied upon these alone. She has employed, with consummate skill, those means by which appeal is made to the universal susceptibility to ideas of beauty and grandeur as embodied in sound and form. Large account must be taken of the influence of art in explaining the wonderful success of the Roman Catholic Church. She has constantly made use of the highest attainments of poetry, architecture, painting, sculpture, and music, both for direct instruction and also for

captivating the mind by the still more powerful force of symbolism and suggestion. In using these agencies she has taken cognizance of every variety of aptitude and opportunity. Her resources are so vast that no grade of taste and culture has remained untouched. For the vulgar she has garish display; for the superstitious, wonder and mystery, not stopping at the most palpable deception. For the imaginative and emotional, she clothes her doctrines in the fairest guise, and makes worship an æsthetic delight. Her worship centres in a mystery,—that of the Real Presence,—and this mystery she embellishes with every allurements that can startle, delight, and enthrall. It needs only such an hour as that which I spent in the Antwerp Cathedral to obtain a clue to the secret of the ascendancy of the Roman Church, and to understand the pride in her which her votaries feel,—a pride often stronger than patriotism, a loyalty which resists the insidious temptations of the reason toward intellectual independence.

No other religious system has gone so far in the employment of symbolism for the inculcations of her doctrine. She has recognized the fact that minds that love to rise above form and ceremony, and seek immediate contact with the divine source of truth, are comparatively rare. The majority of mankind require that spiritual influences must come to them in the guise of that which is tangible, a certain nervous thrill is needed to shock them out of their customary material habits. Recognizing this fact, and having to deal with a vast mass of coarse and ignorant people, the Roman Church has even incurred the charge of idolatry by the extreme use she has made of images and symbols. But it may be that in this she has shown greater wisdom than those who censure her. She has certainly never lapsed into the stupid blunder of repelling the aid of art. She knows that the externals of religious observance must be endowed with a large measure of sensuous charm if they would seize hold upon the bulk of mankind. Her fault, if fault there be, is in the tendency to keep

her devotees at the same grade of mixed spirituality and sensuousness at which she finds them. She knows that these two—spirituality and sensuousness—can never be quite separated, and she would run the risk of sometimes subordinating the first to the second, rather than offer a service of a bare intellectuality, empty of those persuasions which artistic genius offers, and which are so mighty to bend the heart in reverence and awe.

Among all the arts upon which religion relies to enforce her conceptions, music is probably the most efficient. All the great historic religions have employed its aid in the impressment of their conceptions upon their votaries. They have perceived that, as Cousin says, "there is between a sound and the soul, physically and morally, a marvellous relation." Christianity indeed has been the only system that could raise music into a fully developed independent art, but this has been due not alone to the profounder spiritual life which she has inspired, but to the fact that the Keltic and Teutonic peoples, whom she early subjugated, were peculiarly endowed with musical genius. In their barbarous condition this inborn quality was hardly conscious of itself, but when awakened by the touch of Christianity stirring a deeper soul life, and united with the southern feeling for form and precision, the conditions for an art of music were prepared. For ecclesiasticism alone is unfavorable to musical progress. After it has given music force enough to intensify the solemnity of its rites, it desires to restrain its further development, lest tone should be cultivated for its own sake, and the mind drawn away from pious contemplation to a merely sensuous and æsthetic enjoyment. The Egyptians and Hebrews, those most religious of all nations, succeeded in keeping music subordinate to ritual. Among the Greeks, also, it was simply the handmaid of poetry and the dance, so long as religious belief and poetic inspiration were controlling forces. In the later period of Greek history, music partially emancipated itself and showed signs of

distinct progress, but the creative impulse had already given place to that of analysis and pedantry. Rome could add nothing. It remained for the Christian Church to take up the feeble heritage of Greek musical practice, and build up a great world art upon it. The church began this process by simplifying and reducing music to a condition as subordinate as it was in the old Hellenic days. She adopted a few of the Greek scales, borrowed and invented a number of chant-like melodies, set them to hymns and Scripture texts, and had them sung in unison and without accompaniment. These chant melodies, called Gregorian, from Pope Gregory the Great, were systematized in a canon which was impressed upon all the churches of the West, and as years went by they became invested with a traditional sanctity which threatened to harden the church service of song into a system as unyielding as that of the ancient Egyptians. So far as the Gregorian chant is concerned, it did so; but just here is found an illustration of the wisdom that has rarely been absent from the administration of the Roman Church. She retained the Gregorian melodies for certain portions of the liturgy, and along with them, and based upon them, built up a musical service in which the most exuberant musical genius could be allowed free play. The church in this instance, as in many others, has acquired the benefits of intellectual progress without incurring the reproach of changeableness or lessening the weight of her traditions.

The next great step after the creation of the Gregorian song was the invention of harmony; perhaps we should say the adoption of it, for it is evident that this usage came from some ancient practice among the northern tribes. This advance made a free independent art of music possible. It made its appearance first in the northern convents early in the tenth century,—a crude and barbarous jargon at first, with the parts moving in unchanging intervals. By-and-by the parts began to separate in timid fashion, one voice singing a Gre-

gorian melody, and one or two others accompanying it in simple and often harsh relations. Here was the germ of all modern music—the seed from which has grown a mighty tree. The new discovery spread to the south and west, and was taken up by ingenious monks, who found in it a rich field for the exercise of the scholastic subtlety which was characteristic of that age. The church, seeing no reason to resist this tendency toward musical elaboration, sought only to keep it under her own control and make it redound to the honor and glory of her ritual.

Her success in this is the musical history of the following centuries down to the close of the sixteenth, when the stream of musical creation began to seek secular channels. The church music was kept apart from that practised by the common people. The church saw the rise and decay of the sweet and natural folk-song of France and Germany; she saw the lyric of the Troubadours and Minnesingers wax and wane, but she found no model there for an art of sacred song suited for her needs. For the form appropriate to the church service is the chorus, not the solo, and the ecclesiastical musicians of the Middle Ages found that in counterpoint existed the materials for the building up of a great choral art. So they toiled early and late to master the obstinate difficulties of their science, postponing the achievement of melodious expression to a later season, striving first to solve the problem of combining independent parts in harmonic smoothness by means of the various methods afforded by the possibilities of imitation, fugue, and canon. As their skill increased, it is not strange that they revelled in its exercise, often losing sight of the true aim of music altogether, writing works to be wondered at for intricacy, compositions in sixteen, twenty, even thirty independent parts, in which melody and meaning were lost in polyphonic confusion. Such productions are nothing now but monuments of an epoch through which music, like every art, must pass—that of mastering technical resources, without which its expression must

remain primitive and restricted. The mediæval musicians, more theorists than composers in the modern sense, spent no time in cultivating melody. They took their themes from the Gregorian tunes or the people's melodies, and constructed a maze of free accompanying parts around them. They never wrote a solo song. They knew nothing of instrumental music. No utterance was allowed in the choir except the unaccompanied chorus, and upon the chorus they lavished an ingenuity and boldness in the wielding of complex vocal effects to which later music can hardly afford a parallel.

As one technical problem after another was mastered, and the process of heaping up difficulties for the pleasure of solving them was driven to its limit, the essential spirit of music more and more infused itself. It was seen that the intellectual element is only the necessary vehicle of beauty and emotional power. The church masters added melodious sweetness, tone color, light and shade; they sought inspiration in the sacred texts, and bent their immense scientific knowledge to the service of intensifying the appeal of the word to the heart. To this end they at last reduced harmonic complexity to that just moderation which allows clearness and flexibility without the sacrifice of grandeur. When this was accomplished, this peculiar form of music belonging to the mediæval church culminated. Music had now entered the most ethereal regions of art. It had established itself as an efficient medium by which the holy passion of the soul which the Christian hope awakens could gratify its longing for utterance.

This growth of mediæval church music is analogous to that of the liturgy which inspired it, and at certain points the two went hand in hand. This liturgy too has been the work of centuries. The Holy Scriptures and the hymns and prayers of pious men have furnished its materials. Prelates and conclaves have added, revised, expunged, and adjusted; until now the ritual stands complete, uniform, fixed by central and

unquestioned authority, marvellously intricate, yet symmetrical and appropriate, adapted to every shade of devotional feeling. It is the hymn of the ages; a magnificent work of art, sublime in its entirety, yet each part fitted to its special use and contributing to the perfection and grandeur of the whole. It is worthy of an institution that demands to be acknowledged as the sole mediator between God and man.

This wonderful liturgy has from the beginning taken a musical expression. From the bald intoning of the officiating priest to the most artistic setting of mass and hymn every sentence in the service has been endowed with the moving power of tone. Outside the Gregorian chant the church has prescribed no special styles of music, but has encouraged all. She has made no effort to control the musical movements of the time: but in music, as in the other arts, has sought to utilize for her own advantage the artistic forces that have been operative around her. The patronage of the arts, which has always been a feature of her policy, has been magnificently repaid, and she has been most fortunate in the fact that the period of richest bloom in modern art occurred before her supreme influence upon intellectual activity had been loosened. To this, music is a partial exception, but only partial. Musical art has reached its full expansion only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Protestant Germany has wrested the crown from Catholic Italy. But in one department, that of sacred vocal music, the Italy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries maintains a prestige which has never been successfully disputed. The artistic genius of Italy had not exhausted itself when the great age of painting was over. There are names, now little known to the world at large, hardly less worthy than those of the world-renowned princes of the brush and chisel: men who labored not merely for the glory of the church, but for the honor of true religion, and who created works which have never been surpassed in the intensity with which they give expression to the profoundest facts of the

Christian consciousness. The student of the Italian genius as manifest in art must therefore not pause at the close of the age of painting, but will find the spirit and the power of Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian continued in Palestrina, Gabrieli, Lotti, and Scarlatti.

The period in which these men and their compeers lived I have called "the golden age of Italian church music." It may be approximately included between the middle of the sixteenth century and the early part of the eighteenth. Although the characteristics of this great age of church music are incorporated, in the popular conception, in the works of Palestrina, he was only the most brilliant of a constellation which without him would have given the epoch almost as splendid a renown. Rome was the head centre of the strictest culture of ecclesiastical song; but the artists of Venice were working out a style less chaste and severe, but even more magnificent in tonal color, and Naples, a little later, furnished worthy rivals in the leaders of her famous school. During the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries, the leading musicians of the church had been natives of Northern France and the Netherlands; and in the church centres of France, Germany, Italy, and even Spain, Flemish choristers, led by Flemish cantors, sang Flemish music in every portion of the service. Names resounded throughout Europe which are strange and uncouth to modern ears—Dufay, Ockenheim, Josquin de Près, Orlandus Lassus, Buus, Clemens non Papa. These and many more built up the great art of counterpoint, and poured into the chapel libraries vast numbers of Masses and Motets, mighty of movement and of bewildering intricacy. But by the middle of the sixteenth century their reign was over. French and Flemish names disappear from the front roll of musical progress, and Italian names take their places. Italian taste and instinct for melody and form now penetrate the dense mass of Flemish counterpoint, and give to the church many rich jewels of song wherewith to adorn

her liturgy. First and foremost in this movement is the achievement of Palestrina, the grandest figure in Italian church music, worthy of the title "Prince of Music" which is carved upon his tomb.

For two hundred years and more after Palestrina's death, the story was told, without contradiction, that the governors of the church had decided to suppress all choral music on account of certain corruptions which the conditions of its scientific development had engendered, and that Palestrina came to the rescue with a Mass whose beauty, and freedom from the blemishes that had been condemned, turned the judges from their purpose and saved the music of the church. This legend has now been pruned down to a less romantic incident. The "Mass of Pope Marcellus" is undoubtedly pure and strong enough to ward off destruction from chorus music, if there had ever been danger of any such catastrophe. But the fact as it stands is hardly less important. No other musical work has an historic interest equal to that of Palestrina's masterpiece. It was the outgrowth of the most critical and triumphant experience through which the Roman Catholic Church has ever passed; it is associated with a struggle whose consequences will last as long as the human race.

All students of history know the story—how a long career of almost absolute supremacy, culminating in a time of wealth and luxury, had brought the inevitable result in a decline of the early austerity and enthusiasm, and the papal court had sunk into a condition that was a scandal to all Christendom. Simony and debauchery went hand in hand in the innermost shrines of Catholicism, so that the youthful Martin Luther, a pilgrim to what he supposed the holy place of religion, turned away, sick with horror and shame at the deeds which were flaunted in the very eyes of the faithful. The contamination spread from the head to the members, disgraceful abuses flourished everywhere, and the priestly office became in multitudes of cases a cloak for avarice and fleshy indulgence.

Since this moral degeneracy had become most pronounced at the very time when the new birth of science and the revival of antique learning were shaking the foundations of superstition, a revolt must inevitably break out against a despotism which had lost its hold upon the moral sense. The conscience of Germany was set on fire by Luther. The Protest became a Reformation and spread over all Northern Europe. So mighty and so reasonable was the outbreak, that there was only one way in which the Catholic Church could resist it, and that was by a thorough reform within herself. The church was equal to the crisis. Men of intellect and piety came to the front, and seized the emergency with determined hands. The Roman Catholic Reaction or Counter Reformation in the latter part of the sixteenth century was a movement hardly less extraordinary than the German Reformation itself. An outburst of enthusiasm, concentrated in the order of the Jesuits; the fearful enginery of the Inquisition, wielded by the bigotry and vast political power of Spain; the suppression of liberalism in the domains of the church; the reassertion of doctrine and the establishment of a military-like discipline throughout the whole organization, stopped the advance of the Reformation. The latent moral energy of Catholicism awoke; the high and low places were purged of iniquity. The church, newly armed, assumed the aggressive. France was won back after a bloody struggle. The Thirty Years' War fixed the permanent boundaries of the two confessions in Germany. The efforts of proselytism and diplomacy, which have succeeded those of arms, have never altered the political limits of the two systems. The nations that were Catholic at the middle of the seventeenth century are Catholic still.

The Council of Trent, which lasted from 1545 to 1563, made a clean job of the work of reform. Every minutest item in the church machinery was scrutinized. Among countless other matters of detail, the question of strengthening the liturgy claimed attention, and with this was involved the con-

dition of the church music. Bitter complaints were at once heard. Pious men declared that the church music had become so self-sufficient that it no longer ministered to edification. It was a vain display of science and vocal skill, they said: they could not hear the sacred words in the jangle of multiplied parts crossing and confusing one another. Worse than that, it admitted features that were worldly and profane. There was some reason for this accusation. The honest Netherlanders, in their fondness for solving technical problems, too often forgot the real purpose of church song. They had also fallen into the habit of going outside the Gregorian chant for themes for their Masses and Motets, and borrowed popular airs that were associated with ditties by no means edifying. Sometimes even, incredible as it may seem, they retained the profane words with the melody; so that the tenor would sing the lines of some rollicking tavern song, while the other voices were sounding forth the "Credo" or the "Sanctus," with an unction not the least impaired by any sense of its low company. The composers who contrived these monstrosities seem to have had no thought of impropriety, at any rate they made no pretence of concealment, and it makes the reader stare when he comes across works, to be sung in the most solemn moment of the service, with such titles as "Adieu, my Love Mass," or "He has a Red Nose Mass."

No harm was intended by this practice, any more than in the parallel incongruities which we find in the sacred pieces of the naïve old painters of Italy and Flanders. But there was a finer taste abroad in the sixteenth century; and when long-tolerated abuses were shaken, it is not strange that some uncompromizing zealots, confounding the evil with the good, were eager to cast the whole store of choral music out of the church precincts once for all. The whole system of counterpoint must go, they cried, and the church return to the plain unison chant of old St. Gregory. But wiser counsels prevailed. It was seen that the more shameful practices, as well

as the overloading of the text with musical embellishments, were not in the essential nature of choral music; that what was needed was sharp pruning here and there, and especially the creation of noble models. The question was left to a committee of cardinals; they summoned Palestrina, already famous in Rome for his musical genius, and asked him to compose a Mass in a style which should seem to him to meet the needs of religion in this emergency. He replied with three Masses, which were performed before the conclave on April 28, 1565. The first two were much admired, but the impression made by the third was extraordinary. Its beauty and pathos, its fidelity to all that was most revered in the traditions of church art, seized upon the hearers like a revelation. The problem was solved; no more thought now of banishing choral music. The unanimous verdict of the cardinals was confirmed by Pius IV., who declared that "of such a nature must have been the harmonies of the new song heard by John the Apostle in the heavenly Jerusalem." The Mass, which Palestrina dedicated to an early and beloved patron, Pope Marcellus II., was given a special performance in the Sistine Chapel, and the proclamation went forth that the Holy Church had found, in the sublime work of her pious servant Palestrina, an example for her faithful ministers in the sphere of music for all time to come.

This verdict of the central authority of the church has never been questioned to this day. The "Mass of Pope Marcellus" is entitled to this unexampled honor. But it could not become a model for all later effort, for a revolution in musical science, of which pope and cardinals had no suspicion, was already stirring. The transformation of the scale system, and the rise of the opera, solo singing, and instrumental music were already foreshadowed in Florence and Venice, and were soon to remove the whole art of music to an entirely new basis. Musical progress was about to escape from the church enclosure, and advance along secular and not ecclesiastical

lines. Palestrina was one of those men who stand at the summit of an upward movement, and bring to maturity the elements of power which it contains, but do not anticipate the developments of the future. The "Marcellus Mass" could not be the source from which a new art was to flow. Its spirit was that which must ever animate a true and living church. As an expression of spiritual aspiration it has never been excelled; but so far as technical form was concerned, it was not a well-spring of the future, but the crowning glory of an epoch that already belonged to the past.

The "Marcellus Mass," notwithstanding its celebrity, is no exceptional work in the long activity of Palestrina. Its combination of sweetness and strength, profound devotional feeling united with grace of melody and sumptuousness of tone color, characterize in greater or less degree all the productions of his pen. In no way inferior to his Flemish masters in respect to easy handling of the involutions of counterpoint, he never lost appropriateness of expression, as they sometimes did, in the labyrinths of his science. Consummate artist as he was, he yet held his harmonic dexterity at the service of an exalted religious reverence. The history of art can show us no more humble and devoted Christian than Palestrina, and his musical style was a distinct reflection of that peculiar spiritual attitude which is the characteristic result of a complete absorption in the mysteries and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church. The melting harmonies, the rhythmless, unimpassioned flow of Palestrina's music, are the most apt and efficient utterance of the tremulous ecstasy of surrender to half-unveiled heavenly glory which thrills the soul of the Catholic devotee. For it is the special characteristic of the Roman Catholic type of piety that it maintains a dualism of God and nature, of the kingdom of heaven and the earthly life. It looks upon the world as altogether evil; it seeks no Divine Unity reconciling nature and humanity, underlying and enfolding both; it is prone to turn away from worldly cares

and humanitarian duties, and directs a passionate ardor toward a present realization of the joys of heaven, absorbing itself in the rapture of the beatific vision. The cloistral life is its ideal; it pants to unite the soul while still in the body with the worship of the redeemed above. A vast amount of its hymnology is occupied with the bliss of the other world, not with the opportunities of this, and all the art of its most pious masters has been devoted to symbolizing the experiences of those who have exchanged the penances of earth for the ecstasies of Paradise. Of this spirit the music of Palestrina and his age is the most complete expression. It is as far removed as possible from secular suggestion; in its ineffable calmness and an indescribable tone of celestial exultation, pure from every trace of struggle, with which it vibrates, it is the most adequate symbol of that eternal assurance to which the devotee aspires and yearns.

Such piety was that of Palestrina, and in his exquisite strains this impassioned surrender of the soul finds its most perfect embodiment. Moving with eyes downcast, in holy meditation, through the agitated world of Rome, he was no part of it. The atmosphere of the sanctuary enfolded him wherever he went; in the trials of his life (and they were many) he found easy retreat into the consolation of religion and of his art, both of which were to him inextricably blended. The rationalism of the age had not touched him. He was a man of the pious old time, dear to the heart of the church in that day of apostasy. A close parallel to him, it seems to me, is to be found in Murillo. Both were absolutely self-forgetful in their devotion to the church, both mystics, given to strange raptures, living in celestial regions in whose atmosphere the mechanism of art was dissolved and sublimated. In Murillo's Immaculate Conceptions and Visions of St. Anthony we have, as it were, Palestrina's tones transmuted into lines and colors. The rapt expressions and attitudes, the undulating forms, the golden hues transfiguring every shape, the vast

aerial perspectives suffused with lights which are not of this world—all this is the projection of a spirit kindred to that of the great Roman, who also lived in heavenly contemplation, and whose music is an echo of the songs of the Apocalypse.

The marked dissimilarity between the effect of the music of the old Roman Catholic school and that of later times is to a large extent explained by the difference in the key and harmonic systems upon which they are based. In the elder schools the scales begin on notes represented by the white keys of the piano, and in general are without sharps or flats. The harmonies therefore sound strange and unexpected to one not accustomed to them. This system admits chromatic alteration and modulation only within very narrow limits; consequently there is little of what we call variety and contrast. It has no pronounced leading melody to which the other parts form an accompaniment, as in our music, but the theme is a few chant-like notes speedily taken up by one part after another; each voice is an independent melody, free but not lawless, and the harmony is not a matter of perpendicular chords, but the result of the combination of single moving parts. The melodious element is therefore like a series of waves; no sooner is the mind fixed upon one than it is lost in the orderly confusion of those that follow. The music seems to have no pronounced rhythm, for our present system of accent and metre is a later development. It does not lack dynamic change or alteration of speed, but these contrasts are so subtly graded that it is rarely apparent where they begin and end. The whole effect is measured, subdued, solemn. We are never startled, there is nothing that sets the nerves throbbing. But as we hear this music again and again, analyzing its properties, shutting out all preconceptions and comparisons, little by little there steal over us sensations of surprise, then of wonder, then of admiration. Its weird harmonies develop unimagined beauties. Without sharp contrast of dissonance and consonance, it is yet full of shifting lights

and hues, like a meadow under breeze and sunshine which, to the untrained eye, seems only a mass of unvarying green, but in which a keener sense sees infinite modulations of the scale of color. No melody lies upon the surface, but the whole harmonic mass is full of undulating melody, each voice pursuing its easy motion amid the ingenious complexity of which it is a necessary and component part. Soon the analytic effort of the hearer gives way to a tranquil satisfaction. The beauty of the harmonies melts into the mind with an indescribable soothing effect. Then a religious awe steals over him. These voices of the invisible choristers seem more than human. This is not worldly music masquerading in ecclesiastical garments. There is no suggestion of the passion of the stage or the virtuoso display of the concert-room. It is what the music of the sanctuary should be—free from all secular and material associations. More than that—it is comprehensive; not the voice of an individual need that separates one believer from all believers, it is the utterance of the whole redeemed congregation in all times and lands. The prayers that all men pray, the praise that all men offer in their better moments, are in these inspired strains. It is music, not of time or place—it is universal.

There is no doubt that accessory and association have much to do with the peculiar impression of awe which music of this kind produces. It was written to be sung in churches whose grandeur solemnizes the mind from the very moment of entrance, and to embellish a service marvellously adapted to fascinate the senses. The union of the arts for the sake of an undivided and immediate effect, of which we hear so much from the disciples of Wagner, was achieved by the Roman Catholic Church centuries ago. She rears the most sumptuous edifices, hangs masterpieces of painting upon their walls, fills every sightly nook with sculptures in wood and marble, devises a ritual of unparalleled variety and splendor, pours over this ritual music of overwhelming grandeur, adjusts all these

means so that each shall enhance the effect of the others, and concentrates their forces so as to act upon the various susceptibilities at the same moment. Music, however beautiful it may be, must not assume to do its work alone; every available means of inspiring awe must unite with it to melt the soul into a passive acceptance of the ministrations of the church.

A notable instance of the part played by circumstance in the enhancing of musical effect is in the performance in the Sistine Chapel of Allegri's "Miserere"—after the Marcellus Mass the most celebrated composition in the possession of the Roman Church. This "Miserere," written about 1650, holds a prominent place in the services on Good Friday, and has always been regarded with a sort of superstitious reverence. Its use elsewhere was for a long time forbidden, under penalty of excommunication. Much of its remarkable effect is, however, due to a peculiar manner of delivery, and the singularly impressive character of the service of which it is a part. Read over from cold type it does not seem in any way remarkable. It is rendered by two choruses, one of four parts, the other of five, singing alternate verses, uniting in a chorus of nine parts at the close. The first few words of each verse are given in reciting monotone, the voices then resolve into freer melodious parts. The whole structure is simple, the expression solemn, as befits the words. Many visitors, listening calmly and critically to this famous composition, have been unable to account for the veneration with which it is regarded. An emperor of Austria in the last century, having obtained the especial favor of a performance of this "Miserere" in his chapel at Vienna, was greatly disappointed in it, and suspected that the Holy Father had palmed off an inferior work upon him. But it was written to be heard only on Good Friday and in the Sistine Chapel. Its intended effect is, we might say, extra-musical, and can be felt only as it blends with the impressive ceremonies of the day and the place.

“Let us call to mind,” says Quatrimere de Quincy, “those chants, so simple and so touching, that terminate at Rome the funeral solemnities of those three days which the church particularly devotes to the expression of its grief in the last week of Lent. In that nave where the genius of Michael Angelo has embraced the duration of ages, from the wonders of creation to the last judgment that must destroy its works, are celebrated in the presence of the Roman pontiff those nocturnal ceremonies whose rites, ceremonies and plaintive liturgies seem to be so many figures of the mystery of grief to which they are consecrated. The light decreasing by degrees, at the termination of each psalm you would say that a funeral veil is extended little by little over those religious vaults. Soon the doubtful light of the last lamp allows you to perceive nothing but Christ in the distance, in the midst of clouds pronouncing his judgments, and some angel executors of his behests. Then at the bottom of a tribune interdicted to the regard of the profane is heard the psalm of the penitent king to which three of the greatest masters of the art have added the modulations of a simple and pathetic chant. No instrument is mingled with those accents. Simple harmonies of voice execute that music, but these voices seem to be those of angels, and their effect penetrates the depths of the soul.”

The noble style of Palestrina, Allegri, and their compeers was also long known as the “Roman style.” In music, as in painting, Italian artists have always been grouped into more or less distinct schools, so that while in studying Italian music we meet many leading individualities, yet they do not, like many German masters such as Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, stand out in conspicuous isolation, with no groups of disciples and imitators around them; but in every case they are simply representatives of a more or less distinctly marked manner which is common to a whole group of workers. These groups are identified with certain cities or

districts, and just as we have the Roman, Venetian, Tuscan, Sienese, and other schools of painting, so we distinguish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Roman, Venetian, Florentine, and Neapolitan schools of music; each discriminated from the rest by the prominence it gives to some special feature or direction in the art. The Roman school clung to the traditions of the past; it strove to refine the forms that had been developed in the north, and purify and elevate their sentiment, but it kept clear of innovations. Florence was the home of the opera, and contributed nothing to church music. In Naples both church music and opera flourished, the latter soon eclipsing the former.

The rival of Rome in church music was Venice. Her masters included men almost worthy to be placed beside Palestrina in church art, and for a time she held the primacy of Italy in the production and patronage of opera. While Rome was conservative, Venice was progressive; the gradual substitution of the modern scale system for the old ecclesiastical, and the cultivation of instrumental music,—two movements which transformed the whole art of music,—dawned first in the churches of Venice. Willaert, the Netherlander, founder of the Venetian line of musical princes, his successors De Rore, Merulo, the Gabrielis, Monteverde, and Lotti, were not only men of mighty power in the great ancestral forms, but they also saw a farther reach in musical expression, and their experiments in chromatic alteration of notes and in instrumental music contributed hardly less than those of the Florentine inventors of dramatic singing to release musical art from the bands of ecclesiasticism and an antiquated system of key and harmony. These departures of the Venetians from strict tradition produced works not less magnificent than those of the Romans, but less severe; more varied in color, possessing a more individualized, we might say dramatic, expression, anticipating the later highly wrought manner which church music has imbibed from secular art. Venetian music betrays

the love of splendor and luxury which characterized all the art of Venice in her golden prime.

It was therefore not accidental that the movement that was to give a new and world-wide impulse to musical art should make its first appearance in church music in Venice. For the "Queen of the Adriatic" was not only the most opulent and powerful, but also the most liberal, democratic, and progressive of all the Italian states. During the period when her sister cities were the prey alternately of foreign oppressors and internal warring factions, she preserved her independence and the stability of her government. Even the Roman pontiff was forced to abate the high pretensions before which the other Italian cities bowed, and to respect the proud dignity with which Venice asserted her undivided authority over her own subjects. Her position among the islands and lagoons of the upper Adriatic protected her from the aggressions of Spain and France, and enabled her also to expend all her energies upon commercial enterprise, which was for centuries the source of her vast wealth and influence. Her immense trade with the East was protected by a mighty fleet, which more than once saved the Mediterranean states from their most dangerous and relentless foe, the Turk. Under the sway of an elective government in which practical wisdom, patriotism, and tyrannical severity were strangely blended, the Venetians developed a civilization that was conspicuous for splendor even in the brilliant period of the Renaissance. Around the name of Venice hangs all that is beautiful in nature, art, and literature. All that can delight the eye in form and color, every imaginable device of personal and architectural adornment, all that can gratify taste and minister to luxury, was gathered from every clime or fabricated by the exhaustless genius of her artists. The art of the Renaissance took here a special development. Surrounded by an almost unparalleled variety and richness of color in sky and water, and stimulated by the love of pomp and show which wealth and power had fostered in pleasure-

loving Italian minds, Venice developed that great school of painters which gave to the world the works of Giorgione, Bellini, Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto, and which, in luxuriance of fancy and brilliancy of execution, surpassed all other outgrowths of the Italian Renaissance. The austerity and subjection of the imagination to religious dogmas and ideals, which we find so marked in the art of Florence and Rome, had little place in Venetian painting. Its works are charged with the love of beauty for its own sake. Its conceptions are rather pagan than Christian. This art is more decorative than the expression of personal feeling; it is inspired by an absorbing passion for worldly pleasure and glory; it uses the historic and traditionary figures of the church, like the shapes of heathen mythology, not to instruct or edify, but to fascinate the eye, and reveal to a beauty-loving people the utmost possibilities of enchantment in color and form.

A somewhat similar spirit can be found in the works of the great church composers of Venice. The Venetian church festivals were as splendid as the secular pageants, and all that could embellish the externals of the church service was eagerly adopted. The pride of the city was the magnificent Cathedral of St. Mark. This noble institution was the centre of a culture that strove to adorn the expression of spiritual aspiration with allurements borrowed from the fairest experiences of earthly life. The organists and chapel-masters of St. Mark's could not remain untouched by the special tendencies of Venetian art. The passion for secular song which swept over all Western Europe in the sixteenth century began to exert an influence upon the strict forms of church music, and nowhere so powerfully as in Venice. It had two results—one to make the church music simpler in structure, and more varied and exact in expression of the text; the other, to throw in more passion and life, to seek musical effect for the enjoyment that comes with nervous excitement. In such efforts at that time lay the only possibility of musical progress. The

organ, now indispensable in the church service, was given a prominence in St. Mark's elsewhere unknown. Its two organs, played by masters of European renown, and the division of the choir into several antiphonal choruses, gave opportunities for musical effect of which the gifted composers who labored at St. Mark's made a brilliant use. Thus, while Palestrina was revealing the highest ideal capabilities of the old system and tradition, Willaert, de Rore, and the Gabriellis were bringing in new elements, which were to give to music an undreamed-of versatility of expression, and at the same time remove it from the exclusive control of the church and lead it into every grade of social and individual activity.

The Venetian masters of course did not see the vast consequences of their work. It was the spirit of the age that was carrying them whither they knew not. With all their innovating tendency they thought only of the honor of their art, not as mere tone, but as ministrant to the glory of the church. Under their hands the Venetian school obtained a celebrity which drew pupils in throngs from every corner of Europe. Progress and wise conservatism were blended in the Venetian masters of the seventeenth century. The Italian *aria*, the inspirer and the consummate flower of modern song, wrought upon them with magical power; but they resisted its sensuous seductions, bending the grace of its melody to enhance the appealing force of the sacred texts. After the Roman school had declined, the fame of the Venetian still continued, and as late as the first quarter of the eighteenth century received a new support from the work of Antonio Lotti.

Born in 1667, Lotti became organist at St. Mark's in 1693, chapel-master in 1736, and died in 1740. He wrote much for the stage in early life, but had not the dramatic fire needed for success in this line. The whole quality of his genius marked him out as a writer for the church, and in this he fully maintained the ancient glories of the Roman service. Most of his works were in the old *a capella* style. Abandoning

the Gregorian chant as the basis of his works, he used short themes of his own invention, treating them in a manner worthy of the best traditions of ecclesiastical art. The tendency of the church music of his day, under the influence of the opera, toward a more vivid and individual manner of expression, is found in his works in chastened form, resulting in a greater variety of harmony, and striking use of dissonances. This is particularly marked in the two magnificent works by which he is best known to-day—the “Crucifixus” for six voices and for eight voices. Modulations and dissonances, impossible to the old key system in which Palestrina wrote, are here employed for the purpose of giving a more characteristic effect to the pathos of the words. No one who has once heard these wonderful compositions can ever forget the impression. They belong among the masterpieces that have contributed so much to the ascendancy of the Roman Catholic Church, and may be held to close that wonderful epoch of Italian sacred art which began with Cimabue in the fourteenth century, and which, after the era of painting had culminated, continued the miracles of the Italian genius in a new direction through another period of two hundred and fifty years.

The Neapolitan school arose under Alessandro Scarlatti, one of the greatest musical geniuses that ever lived, in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Although it is associated with the development of the modern form of the Italian grand opera, yet all the masters of the school in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wrote abundantly for the church; and Scarlatti himself, Durante, Leo, and Pergolese attained a fame little inferior to that of the Romans and Venetians. Yet in their day the decadence of church music under the influence of the stage had already begun, and it was due mainly to the later Neapolitans that the music prevalent in the church in the latter part of the eighteenth century could hardly be distinguished from the flippant, shallow operatic style beloved in Paris and Vienna.

A story has come to us from the period of deepest degeneracy which shows the inherent strength of the art of the golden age, and its ability to strike awe even upon a corrupted taste. At the coronation of Napoleon I., in 1804, the French musicians in charge prepared a musical effect which they considered in keeping with the unprecedented grandeur of the occasion. They assembled eighty harps, whose simultaneous performance certainly astonished the spectators. But as the Pope entered the church, the choir of the Sistine Chapel broke forth with Scarlatti's motet "Tu es Petrus." The effect of this magnificent composition, although written in a style already archaic, was overwhelming, and for some time afterward there was no surer way of giving offence to a French musician than alluding to the "sublime" effect of the eighty harps.

The passion for the Italian opera which swept over Europe in the eighteenth century absorbed the attention of almost every composer of note in Italy and France. Even the traditions of the church could not resist the fascinations of the new melody, and in almost all the great centres of ecclesiastical song the service music lapsed into a style hardly to be distinguished from that of the stage. Venice, as we have seen, held this license at bay until the middle of the eighteenth century, and the numerous opera writers of Naples for a time maintained a separation of the styles of church and theatre. But the universal relaxation of taste which marked the eighteenth century, the passion for novelty and sensationalism fostered by the luxurious courts and easily communicated to the common people, soon penetrated the precincts of the church. The reforming zeal of the Catholic Reaction of the sixteenth century, which aimed at the repression of the joys of the senses and imagination in favor of a mediæval monkish austerity, had spent itself; levity and worldliness had again the upper hand. The only art that retained a vigorous life was music, but this had completely escaped from the control of the church, and was giving all its seductive powers to the

service of gaiety and diversion. The age of instrumental music had also begun, and the combination of the orchestra and the single voice, united with the spectacle and mimic passion of the stage, was setting Europe wild. The church had nothing that could counteract this attraction, and so she adopted it. The Italian *aria* and instrumental accompaniment lent their sensuous charms to the liturgy. Emotional and nervous excitement insensibly took the place of spiritual exaltation. The female voice, long banished from the church service on account of its supposed sensuous and passionate quality, was restored. Professional opera singers repeated in the choir loft their popular triumphs upon the stage. They brought all their vocal arts with them, their florid embellishments, their long-sustained trumpet-like tones, their swells and diminuendoes. The functions of church and dramatic composition were united in one man, and finally in one style. Chapels and convents were made training schools for the opera, as well as for the church. Archbishops and cardinals had boxes at the theatre. Priests and monks wrote operas and superintended their performance. Even such serious-minded men as Haydn and Mozart caught the contagion, and wrote Masses whose secular character was poorly apologized for by Haydn, who sought to justify his showy church music by saying that the proper state of mind of a Christian was one of joy. Cherubini, indeed, wrote Masses and Requiems whose sublimity and pathos recalled the noble traditions of the age of Palestrina, but even these glorious works excited more wonder than sympathy. So low a point did this decline reach in France in the early part of the nineteenth century, that we can hardly avoid wondering why the church chapel-masters stopped short of introducing the *ballet* into the service, and so make the transition complete. Rossini's "Stabat Mater"—exquisite as stage melody and as dance music, as a setting of the infinite sadness of the hymn simply an abomination—is the best illustration of what this corruption of taste was able to pro-

duce. When listening to some of the typical church music of the period, our thoughts are much like those of Lulli, the eccentric founder of the French grand opera, who, once hearing in church an *aria* taken from one of his dramatic pieces, exclaimed, "Do not take it ill, O Lord! it was not meant for thee."

This tendency toward worldliness in the music of the church could not last. Ecclesiastical art can never, indeed, be kept apart from secular in its technique and externals, but mankind will always insist upon a distinction in spirit. If the ideal of church music seemed lost for a time, it was the inevitable result of the rationalizing temper and doctrinal laxity which in the eighteenth century had succeeded the theological strifes and hatreds of the sixteenth and seventeenth. Seriousness and right judgment are now returning in the fields of both art production and art criticism. In music the revulsion is approaching the flood, and it is so natural and wholesome that we may believe that the canons of taste will not be relaxed again. The spirit of Palestrina, Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner has seized not only those who write music, but also those who perform and those who hear. Music is no longer, as in the eighteenth century, a means of mere voluptuous diversion and vain parade. It is becoming a means of culture by contributing to the refinement of the emotion and the enforcement of lofty conceptions. This great intellectual stress is enfolding the music of the church, there is a new recognition of the power of music in aiding to stir those sensibilities that go forth in worship, and every confession and every sect is striving, often feebly because disconnectedly and ignorantly, yet hopefully, after a form of music free from secular associations, that shall bring the service of praise into common action with those of prayer and exhortation.

One evidence of the new movement is the growing recognition of the fact that the problem of church music has once been solved. Here and there in all the countries of Western

Europe there is a revival of the culture of the Italian music of the golden age, and Palestrina, Lotti, Durante, Leo, and their compeers have been restored to their rightful thrones as princes of their art. I do not mean that the church music of the future will imitate the forms and manner of these ancient compositions. Music has put forth new organs since that day, which cannot be cut off and cast aside; Christendom will not, like Egypt, stereotype for all time her religious forms and symbols; new apprehensions of truth take on new manifestations. But the ideal of the old Italian masters, in view of which they kept the atmosphere of the sanctuary free from all profane intermixture, and held their artistic genius before the tribunal of their piety, must be the ideal of the church art of the future. The composer who will honor and commend religion by his strains will be one who, not abjuring the means of impression which modern advances in melody, harmony, and tone color have given him, will yet know how to discriminate the style of the sanctuary from that of the theatre and the concert hall, following the example of the masters of the golden age who, while they arrayed music in all the splendors which science and imagination could devise, knew how to make her tributary to the ministry of the Sacred Word. Affirm or deny as we may the inherent religious potency of music, if in any way she be severed from vital and organic connection with the service of prayer and meditation, her real effect will almost certainly be merely æsthetic, and not truly religious. The function of music is not so much to originate emotion as to intensify feelings previously suggested. Here is her mission in the church, and nobly has she fulfilled it. History has proved that when rightly applied she can act as wings to the soul, bearing it upward to its native home—the presence of its Creator and Saviour.