



BOOK I. OF

Cantiones Sacrae,

COMPOSED BY

WILLIAM BYRD.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM HORSLEY,

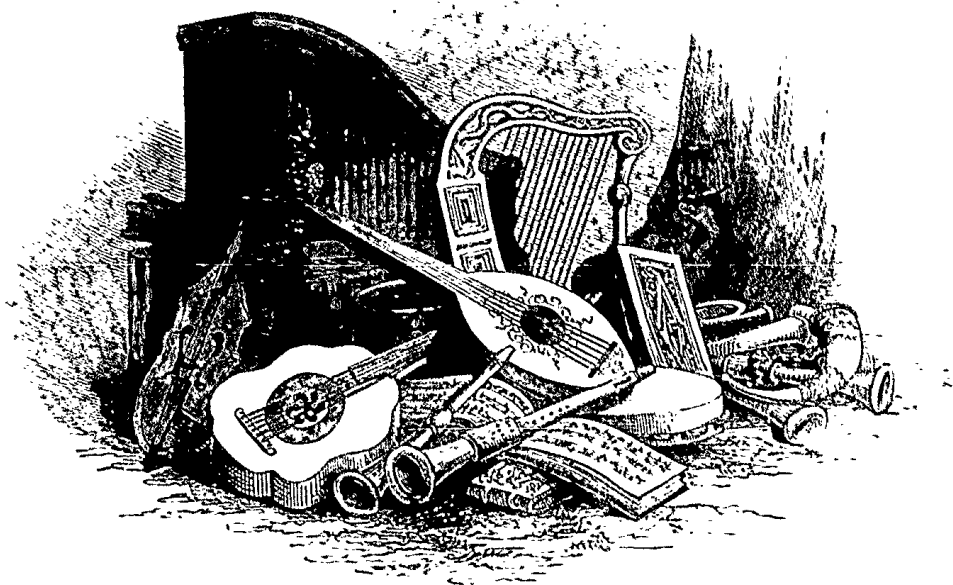
MUS. BAC. OXON.

PRINTED FOR THE MEMBERS

OF THE

Musical Antiquarian Society.

PRINTED BY RICHARD AND JOHN E. TAYLOR, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.



INTRODUCTION.

MR. RIMBAULT, in his memoir of Byrd, and in his Introduction to the Mass of that Author, has treated his subjects so copiously, that he has left us nothing to desire concerning them. Some remarks, however, on the following Compositions, and on the state of the English and Foreign Schools of Music, where those Compositions were first produced, may not be unacceptable to the Members of the Musical Antiquarian Society.

Truth, and truth alone, should be the Critic's great object, as well as of the Historian. He should consider himself as a Judge between the Author and the Public, and, in that capacity, he should be careful to preserve an unbiassed frame of mind. He who suffers himself to be moved by petty resentment; he who suffers himself to be swayed by petty interest; he who allows pride or prejudice to influence him in the least degree, is unworthy of the office which he assumes. He first deceives himself, and then labours to deceive all those who may confide in his opinions.

If impartiality is ever to be expected, it must surely be when we speak of the works of those who have quitted this earthly scene. Between them and us there is a "great gulf," which neither praise nor censure can pass: the silence of the grave cannot be invaded.

The impartiality here spoken of necessarily leads us to a consideration of the whole subject, on which we venture to pronounce judgment. We should consider defects as well as excellences; we should not close the "mental eye" on one or the other; but, by a correct statement of facts, and careful deductions from them, we should endeavour to put our readers in a condition to judge fairly for themselves.

These observations I have thought necessary; because a minute examination has led me to form a very different opinion of the Cantiones Sacræ to that which I formerly entertained. Judging from a few favourable specimens, and trusting, as I am bound to confess, too much to the applause which has been lavished on them for more than two centuries, I had formed notions of their excellence which exist in my mind no longer.

It would be the height of folly and injustice to apply many of our modern rules of Composi-

tion to the Works of the Fathers of English ecclesiastical Music. But it must be remembered, that these Works have been held up to us, by poets and historians*, as being almost models of perfection; combining in themselves the chief characteristics of fine Music.

It may therefore be useful and interesting to examine their claims to such high distinction; and if their defects are to be ascribed to the rude state of the art at the period when they were first produced, it must fairly be admitted that that rude state tells strongly against their supposed excellence.

Before the Reformation, Music was cultivated principally by the Clergy, and our Schools of Counterpoint and Composition were generally confined to Monasteries; we may therefore suppose that Monks were the instructors of those who preceded Tye, Tallis, and Byrd.

Previously to their time, however, a great School of Counterpoint had been established in the Netherlands, from which issued Masters who became Tutors to the rest of Europe†. But it does not appear that their principles, or a knowledge of their practice, had reached English Musicians. Indeed Italian, or any other foreign Music was little, if at all known in this country, before the publication of Yonge's "Musica Transalpina" in 1588; it is, therefore, not to be imagined that our composers, previous to the time of Morley, were at all acquainted with the Works of the Italian theorists. Nevertheless, Franchinus Gaffurius, "and the more ancient writers," gave, in the fifteenth century, "eight rules of Counterpoint‡:" Pietro Aaron published his "Toscanello" in 1523§, and Zarlino's celebrated Work appeared about forty years after.

We are apt to suppose that the Roman School was founded by Palestrina; but it existed long before the time of that great composer, who contributed much, however, to its improvement. The Venetian School was established early in the sixteenth century; the Neapolitan School in the fifteenth century. To these may be added the distinguished School of Lombardy, and the Schools of Florence and Bologna||.

Thus, while Englishmen were working, as they now too often work, alone and deprived of those advantages which arise from intercommunity of thought, the Italians enjoyed splendid establishments, in which they found not only instruction, but all the benefits which the impulses of generous emulation never fail to confer. Can we wonder, then, at the superiority of the Italian School of Music, at the period now under our consideration?

But we have been told, that our Tallis and Byrd were equal to Palestrina and his contemporaries. "If," says Dr. Burney, "foreigners should ever deign to look into my book, it is my wish, for the honour of our nation, they should see that, long before the Works of Palestrina had circulated throughout Europe, we had Choral Music of our own, which for gravity of style, *purity* of harmony, ingenuity of design, and *clear* and *masterly* contexture, was *equal* to the *best* productions of that truly venerable Master¶." This is a well-turned sentence; its correctness will be tested hereafter.

* It is quite clear that Dr. Burney, with more knowledge of Music than Sir John Hawkins, often wrote about things which he did not carefully examine: it is equally clear that Sir J. Hawkins, with more unwearied industry than Dr. Burney, often wrote about things which he did not thoroughly understand.

† Zarlino, the greatest Italian Theorist, and Palestrina the greatest Italian Composer, of his age, were both instructed by Flemings.

‡ Burney, vol. iii. p. 155, Note.

§ Dr. Callcott (Musical Grammar, p. 158) says, "the *ten* rules of Pietro Aaron were afterwards extended to *twelve*." These "rules" related to Counterpoint, and it is rather curious, that although they are thus spoken of by Callcott, and are mentioned by Burney and Hawkins, neither of them has informed us in what they consisted. According to Dr. Callcott, Nicholas Burtius, in 1487, gave "five precepts of Counterpoint which will ever be classical, particularly that of avoiding fifths and Octaves in succession."—*Musical Grammar*, p. 159.

|| Burney, vol. iii. p. 181.

¶ Burney, vol. iii. p. 76. In the above quotation the italics are mine.

Sir J. Hawkins is less diffuse than the Doctor, though he justly calls Tallis “one of the greatest Composers that this country ever bred.” Sir John afterwards says, “The Compositions of Tallis, learned and *elegant* as they are, are so truly original, that he may justly be said to be the Father of the Cathedral style* ; and though a like appellation is given by the Italians to Palestrina, it is much to be questioned, considering the time he flourished, whether he could derive the least advantage from the improvements of that great man.” In my mind, there is little or no question at all on the subject. There seems to be internal evidence that Tallis had not seen the Compositions of Palestrina : at least, it is clear that he had not studied, nor improved by the Works of the great Roman Master ; yet Sir J. Hawkins tells us that Tallis was “a careful peruser of the Works of other men†.”

Byrd shared largely in the praises which were bestowed on his distinguished preceptor. Morley styles Byrd his “loving Master never without reverence to be named of Musicians ;” and Peacham asserts, that, even by the judgment of France and Italy, he was not excelled by the Musicians of either of those countries.

Speaking of Byrd’s *Cantiones Sacræ* and *Gradualia*, Peacham says, “*what all must acknowledge who peruse them, that they are angelical and divine‡ :*” now it is because I have perused them, and perused them carefully, that I find myself unable to admit the justness of such high-sounding appellations.

Fine Music was said, by Gluck, to consist in expressive melody, pure harmony, and well-conducted modulation : correct rhythm might be added, did we not know that melody cannot exist without it. In the Compositions which were produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we must not look for melody, according to our present notion of it ; for such melody did not exist till Musicians directed their attention more particularly to rhythm, and the use of bars became general§.

Neither must we look for modulation, as it is now practised. At the period under consideration, the tonality—that is the scales Major and Minor—was by no means fixed ; according to some, it was not fixed for more than a century after||. Unacquainted, therefore, with the natural relations of the scales, which have since been discovered, and not a little shackled, we may suppose, by rules which had been founded on the ecclesiastical modes, the modulation of the

* We may admit that Tallis improved our “Cathedral style,” but we cannot call him the Father of it, when we recollect what had been produced before him by White, Shepherd, Tye, and others.

† Hawkins, vol. iii. pp. 258, 261.

‡ Hawkins, vol. iii. pp. 290, 291. Few will be inclined to pay much regard to honest Peacham’s opinion, after reading the praises which he bestows on his Master, Horatio Vecchi of Modena, who, “with *excellent judgment*, driveth a crotchet through many minims, *causing it to resemble the links of a chain!*”—Hawkins, vol. iii. p. 194.

§ “Melody implies not only the progression of one single part, but also that general result of the various parts in harmony, which produce the effect of Melody, by the proper distribution of their sounds. Prinz seems to have been the first who distinguished between the *Monodic* Style, in which the Melody is confined to one single part ; and the *Polyodic* Style, in which the Theme, and its dependent subjects, are distributed among the different parts of a composition. These two epithets Prinz appears to have taken from Kircher ; and this profound and original view of Melody has been very ably developed by Niehlman of Berlin, who clearly proves that those pieces which are produced by the *Monodic* designs of the Composer, are far inferior to the *Polyodic* arrangement of the same ideas. In this last class we may place the Motetts of Palestrina, the Choruses of Handel, and the Symphonies of Haydn.”—Callcott, *Musical Grammar*, p. 85. Thus Compositions in parts are *Monodic* or *Polyodic*. The greater number of Stevens’ Gleees afford examples of the *Monodic* principle ; for, in them, we find a leading Melody, to which the other parts are mere accessories : Callcott’s “O voi che sospirate,” and “O snatch me swift,” are beautiful examples of the *Polyodic*. It is as *Polyodic* Compositions that we must always consider the Works of the Old Masters.

|| “C’est dans l’école de Naples, et particulièrement dans celle de Durante qu’elle à été fixée sous tous les rapports, du moins en ce qui concerne la pratique.”—Choron, *Sommaire de l’Histoire de la Musique*, p. xxxviii. The following example,

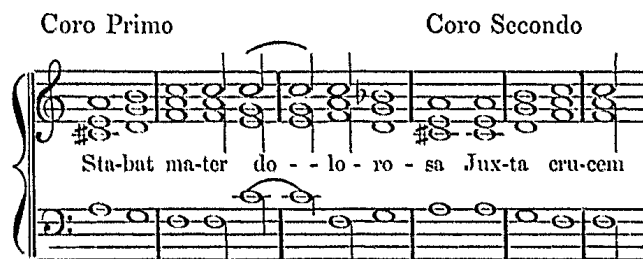
Old Masters was vague and timid*. They appear to have been almost alarmed, when leaving their original scale, and glad to return to it. Thus their compositions have little of that relief which well-conducted modulation affords; on the contrary, from the want of it, they are too often monotonous and tedious. But the want of leading Melodies, and of varied and effective Modulation, was common to all the Musical Schools of Europe; and it does not appear that the English Composers were, in those respects, more deficient than their continental brethren.

We come now to a consideration of Harmony and Counterpoint, which is only Harmony more in detail; here the superiority of the Foreign Schools must be acknowledged.

In all the arts there are fundamental principles which can never be affected by time or circumstance; though from ignorance, or from a morbid desire for novelty, they may be neglected. Correctness of outline, beauty of form, light and shade, are objects of the highest importance to the Sculptor and the Painter; though Caricature exists, and rudeness and deformity have often been exhibited. In like manner, purity of Harmony must ever be of the greatest consequence to the accomplished Musician, though it may be decried by the idle and the ill-informed. Purity of Harmony consists in grateful combination, and in melodious progression. An union, then, of graceful melodies constitutes fine Harmony; for where the melody, or, in other words, the progression of any *single* part is irregular, the effect of the *whole* is injured. These principles are applicable to the Harmony of every age and country. Neither time, nor fashion, nor caprice can affect them; for they have their foundation in Nature, and, when they are disregarded, we look in vain for the beautiful and the true.

Tried by these principles, the following Compositions will appear very defective; whether we consider the combinations, or progressions, which are frequently found in them. In the first respect, there is the monstrous combination of the Major and Minor third on the same root: in the eighteenth Song, "Aspice, Domine," we meet with it not less than four times, namely, in the nineteenth, fifty-second, sixtieth, and sixty-second bars†. False relations of the sharp and flat eighth—in technical language, "Mi contra fa"—are still more frequent‡. The Counterpoint of these Songs, also, is not always so clear, nor so correct, as we might have expected from the high reputation of the Author. Consecutive Fifths and Eighths are often found; more especially

taken from a Stabat Mater composed by Palestrina, and performed in the Pontifical Chapel during the Holy Week, furnishes a curious instance of the uncertainty, relative to the scale, which prevailed in the time of the Author.



* The practice of no other art has varied so much as that of Music. In the sixteenth century, Composers were afraid, or ashamed, to venture "from home:" at the present time, a Composer would almost blush were he to be found "at home" six bars together!

† The Modulation, on one hand, and the point of Fugue on the other, prove clearly, that there is no error of the press in these instances. We must therefore conclude that the Author wrote advisedly, leaving his auditors to digest such anomalies as well as they could.

‡ These false relations, condemned by the greatest theorists long before the time of Byrd, are so common in the works of early English Composers, that we are almost led to believe they considered them as beauties. Their practice, however, was bad; for it is evident that sounds which by their nature cannot be combined, cannot be heard in *immediate* succession without affecting the ear in a disagreeable manner. So convinced of this were the great Masters of Counterpoint, that they embodied their opinion in the well-known saying, "Mi contra fa Diabolus est in Musica."

those which are *hidden*, or which arise from an injudicious crossing of the parts, and the parts themselves often move in an awkward and unmelodious manner*.

That these Songs contain some choral beauties is certain; and No. 17, "In Resurrectione," and No. 28, "Lætentur Coeli," possess unusual animation of style, considering the period at which they were written. The finest of all the Songs, however, are No. 20, "Ne irascaris, Domine," and No. 21, "Civitas Sancti tui." The first is found, in Boyce's Collection, to the words "O Lord, turn thy wrath;" the second to "Bow thine ear."

In making these Selections great judgment was displayed; and, if the other portions of the work had approached to them in excellence, it would have been more deserving of the praises which have been too heedlessly lavished on it.

That the work is curious, and worthy of being reprinted by the Musical Antiquarian Society, may be readily admitted. We must, however, bear in mind that the examples it furnishes are of a School long since passed away, and that (like other music of the time) it contains principles of composition no longer received.

* Instances of these faults occur so frequently, that I shall not attempt to point them out. For the Contrapuntist it would be unnecessary; and for any other, it would be useless.

W. H.

Kensington Gravel Pits,
July 1842.



Liber primus

SACRARVM CANTIO-
num Quinque vocum.

*Autore Guilielmo Byrd Organista
Regio, Anglo.*



*Excudebat Thomas Est ex assigna-
tione Guilielmi Byrd.*


Cum priuilegio.

Londini. 25. Octob. 1589.

Illustriſſimo Proceri, claróq; multis nominibus

EDOARDO SOMERSET Comiti Worceſtriæ,

Mæcenati ſuo clementiſſimo.

 Onnulli, certa mihi neceſſitudine coniuncti, ſolidæq; exiſtimationis homines, cùm nuperrimè perſpicerēt, meas quasdam cantiones Muſicas, per ſcriptorum in delin-
deandis antigraphis incuriam, vicij aliquid contraxiſſe, quod ex noſtro Muſeolo in autographis minimè prorepſerat: ut ipſas, ſed ad tornum priùs redactas, et caſtigatiores iam prælo ſubmitterem, ſuo tandèm rogatu impulerunt. Ceterùm tanta fuit earum farrago, ut ipſam (ſicuti per otium licuerit) in varios libros distribuendam eſſe duxerim, ſuiſq; in lucem temporibus exponendam. Primam itaq; partem huius laboris (nobiliffime Comes) Tibi, ut auſpicatiſſimo bonarum litterarum, et virtutis Patrono ex officio inſcribendam putaui. Siquidèm in tota hac nobilium noſtrorũ celeberrima corona, aut vno te Muſicæ peritiorem, aut (nè reliquas dicam laudes) amantiorem agnoui certè neminem. Tu verò, pro ſolita in me humanitate et amore, xeniolũ hoc, quantulumcunq; eſt, recti (quæſo) conſule, meq; in tuis clientèlis numerato. Interim humillimis ego precibus a Deo enixiſſimè contendam, ut Tibi, Tuiſq;, firmiſſimi honoris incrementum, et veram ſælicitatem profuſè elargiatur.

Tui honoris

obſervantiſſimus

Guilielmus Byrd.

INDEX,

IN QUO NUMERUM, INITIUM, ET PAGINAM UNIUSCUIUSQUE
CANTIONIS LECTOR REPERIET.

| No. | | Pag. |
|-----|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Defecit in dolore vita mea | Prima Pars . 1 |
| 2. | Sed tu, Domine, refugium factus es mihi . . . | Secunda Pars . 5 |
| 3. | Domine, præstolamur adventum tuum | Prima Pars . 8 |
| 4. | Veni, Domine, noli tardare | Secunda Pars . 13 |
| 5. | O Domine, adjuva me, et salvus ero | 17 |
| 6. | Tristitia et anxietas occupaverunt interiora mea . | Prima Pars . 23 |
| 7. | Sed tu, Domine, qui non derelinquis | Secunda Pars . 30 |
| 8. | Memento, Domine, congregationis tuæ | 34 |
| 9. | Vide, Domine, afflictionem nostram | Prima Pars . 40 |
| 10. | Sed veni, Domine, et noli tardare | Secunda Pars . 44 |
| 11. | Deus, venerunt gentes in hereditatem tuam . . | Prima Pars . 48 |
| 12. | Posuerunt morticina servorum tuorum | Secunda Pars . 52 |
| 13. | Effuderunt sanguinem ipsorum tanquam aquam . | Tertia Pars . 56 |
| 14. | Facti sumus opprobrium vicinis nostris | Quarta Pars . 61 |
| 15. | Domine, tu jurasti patribus nostris | 66 |
| 16. | Vigilate: nescitis enim | 73 |
| 17. | In resurrectione tua, Domine | 80 |
| 18. | Aspice, Domine, de sede sancta tua | Prima Pars . 83 |
| 19. | Respice, Domine, de sanctuario tuo | Secunda Pars . 88 |
| 20. | Ne irascaris, Domine, satis | Prima Pars . 90 |
| 21. | Civitas Sancti tui facta est desolata | Secunda Pars . 95 |
| 22. | O quam gloriosum est regnum | Prima Pars . 100 |
| 23. | Benedictio et claritas et sapientia | Secunda Pars . 105 |
| 24. | Tribulationes civitatum audivimus | Prima Pars . 108 |
| 25. | Timor et hebetudo mentis | Secunda Pars . 111 |
| 26. | Nos enim pro peccatis nostris | Tertia Pars . 116 |
| 27. | Domine, secundum multitudinem dolorum | 120 |
| 28. | Lætentur cæli, et exultet terra | Prima Pars . 124 |
| 29. | Orietur in diebus tuis | Secunda Pars . 128 |

