

# School of English Church Music

## QUARTERLY NEWS SHEET

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### FESTIVAL SERVICE BOOK.

The complete book of words and music for the Festival of English Church Music to be held in the Albert Hall on June 27th is now issued. The last *News Sheet*, quoting from the *Daily Mail* (whose generous co-operation has made the Festival possible), gave a brief outline of the scheme. Further information will be found in this issue under the heading "The Work of the S.E.C.M."

The first thing to be said of the Festival Service Book (printed by Novello & Co.) is that on the first page are Directions to the Choir. All choirmasters are asked to study these directions very carefully before beginning rehearsal, and to refer to them frequently during the period of rehearsal. Only so can that unanimity of style be attained (especially in Responses and Psalms) which is the first essential of good church singing.

Evensong is preceded by five hymns with fine old (mostly 18th Century) tunes, and three Processional Hymns, all with equally fine modern tunes. The composers of these last are Martin Shaw ("Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow"), Basil Harwood ("Thy Hand, O'God") and Vaughan Williams ("For all the Saints"). "God Save the King" then follows in Elgar's arrangement. Evensong begins with Tallis's Responses, and the two Psalms chosen are 46 and 91. The first of these will be sung in plainsong (Tone V, 1st Ending); the second is set to an Anglican chant by Goss. After the first Lesson an Office Hymn to a plainsong tune precedes the Magnificat (Walmisley in D minor) and after the Second Lesson the Nunc Dimittis will be sung to the setting of Gibbons in F (transposed into A flat). Groups of anthems, representative of Prayer, Worship and Praise, each group preceded by a Congregational Hymn, follow the Collects; between the second and third groups the Bishop of Winchester will deliver an address. The most varied styles are placed side by side. The 16th Century "Lord for Thy tender Mercy's Sake," formerly attributed to Farrant, is paired with Balfour Gardiner's "Evening Hymn,"; Purcell's "Rejoice in the Lord" and Parry's Coronation Anthem (1902) "I was Glad," with Holst's chorus, "I vow to Thee my Country" (the tune taken from "The Planets"), make the trio of Praise. The inclusion of Bennett's "God is a Spirit" beside Wesley's "Thou wilt Keep him" is possibly the one choice open to criticism, but it is there for a purpose. Bennett's quartet from "The Woman of Samaria" remains one of the most popular of parish church anthems, and the objection is directed more against the usual sentimental interpretation of it than against the music itself. One of the chief objects of this Festival is to help the choirs taking part in it to a purer standard of interpretation, and Dr. Nicholson hopes to show how this favourite of innumerable choirs and congregations may be used and not abused. With the same object the authentic version of Gibbons's Nunc Dimittis (reprinted from Tudor Church Music) and the Church Music Society's edition of "Lord, for Thy tender Mercy's Sake," edited by G. P. Arkwright from the Ely Manuscript, have been chosen to replace the debased versions which have gained currency in print.

These examples emphasize the practical purpose of the Festival. It would have been easier to make the collaborating choirs concentrate on the performance of some big choral work of the kind which gains magnificence from the tone of 1,200 voices, but it would not have been useful. In this service book the choirs have a whole repertory of Church Music which can be sung in their own Churches throughout the year, and by which they may add to the vitality and beauty of their regular services. Some of it most of the singers will know already and will sing the better for their special work on it under Dr. Nicholson's direction. That is probably true of Stanford's noble Te Deum in B flat which after the Blessing will bring the Festival to a close.

## THE SCHOOL AND THE DIOCESES.

For some time the Council of the S.E.C.M. have had in mind the desirability of making a closer connection with the choirs affiliated to the School and the general subscribers, and it was announced at the last General Meeting that they had decided to release the Secretary from his office duties and send him out into the Dioceses, in order to get into personal touch with existing members of the School, and also create further interest in the School and its work.

The arrangement took effect from the beginning of the year. The Secretary began his new activities in the Chichester Diocese. This Diocese was chosen, first of all because it had the greatest number of affiliated choirs, and secondly because Dr. Nicholson had recently addressed a Meeting of the Brighton District Organists' Association. Centres were made at Brighton, Worthing, Eastbourne, and Wadhurst, and visits were paid to the Parishes in and around these areas. The work involved consisted chiefly in getting to know representatives of affiliated choirs and those who were already members, and in breaking fresh ground, but at Wadhurst the Annual Church Meeting was addressed on the subject of the School.

A second expedition took the Secretary to Worcester and Evesham. A Meeting of the Worcester Rural Deanery was addressed in the Chapter House of the Cathedral, with the Archdeacon of Worcester in the Chair and Sir Ivor Atkins speaking in support of the work. There are already about half a dozen choirs in the Diocese which are affiliated to the School, but it is hoped to have many more, and Sir Ivor Atkins gave a lead to the Diocese by promising that the Cathedral Choir would become affiliated.

Another Meeting was addressed at Evesham, but unfortunately bad weather and other engagements kept many away, and only four or five Parishes were represented. The weekend was spent in two villages in the neighbourhood of Evesham—Sunday morning at Sedgeberrow Parish Church and the evening at Littleton. The visit to Littleton is an interesting sequel to what happened some time ago. On March 28th, 1929, the Vicar of Littleton wrote to the School, saying that he was interested in what the School was doing, and needed much help in his Parish. What could the School do for him? The Affiliation Scheme was explained to him by letter, and he soon wrote to say that he had been able to persuade the Parish to become affiliated, although he was sorry to find that the School could not then promise him any help with his difficulties in a practical way by sending someone to advise him on the subject. He was convinced, however, that it was up to everyone to throw in his lot with the movement. When, therefore, the Vicar of Littleton was found to be at the Meeting at Evesham, the opportunity of visiting the Parish and giving some practical help was gladly undertaken.

On March 11th Members of the Newbury Ruri-Decanal Conference were given an opportunity of learning more about the S.E.C.M. A big Service of combined choirs will be held at Newbury in May, and more than fifteen choirs will take part.

Dr. Nicholson conducted and gave an address at a Service of combined choirs in the Blackburn Diocese on March 15th, and the Secretary visited the Diocese with the object of looking up those choirs and Parishes represented at the Service.

Plans for the future consist of a long stay in the Chelmsford Diocese, and visits to St. Albans, Rochester, Guildford, Southwark and London Dioceses. Other Dioceses will be visited in due course. Please note "Special needs (1)" below.

### THE WORK OF THE S.E.C.M.

#### FESTIVAL OF ENGLISH CHURCH MUSIC, ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

The arrangements for the Festival are well in hand. The applications from affiliated choirs wishing to send representatives was (even before the last date for entry) considerably in excess of the available seats; the number allowed to each choir had to be severely "rationed" and many of those who applied too late had to be disappointed. They have, however, been placed on a "waiting list" so that if any choirs should fall out their places need not be left vacant.

Sectional rehearsals are being arranged at convenient centres in different parts of the country, and subsidiary rehearsals will augment these, so that every choir will have to be prepared for a qualifying test.

For the convenience of choirs sending representatives to the Festival but desiring to use the music in their own churches a large number of copies were set aside which were obtainable at the very low price of 1/-; these are now all exhausted, and additional copies can only be obtained at the regular price of 2/6 and only from the *Daily Mail* Offices, Northcliffe House, E.C.4.

The distribution of tickets for the audience is also entirely in the hands of the *Daily Mail*, and application should be made to that office; no tickets are available at the College, and for obvious reasons no "free tickets" can be granted except to those actually taking part.

#### GRAMOPHONE RECORDS.

The Columbia Graphophone Company has issued a double-sided record of the two psalms to be sung at the Festival. (Ref. No. D.B.17, price 3/-, from the usual agents, and not obtainable through the College.)

