ORGANIST.

July, 1899

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by reissued in permanent book form,	EDITORIAL.	PRAYER, Gustave Tritant, 88 COMMUNION, 7. L. Battman, 84	The Bartley Open	
ASHFORD'S ORGAN VOLUNTARIES	THE POSTLUDE, 1 Some Particular Uses of the Church	POSTLUDE Gustave Tritant, 85	Book-Holder	
No. 1.	Organ, 1-2	MODERATO, Alfred Phillips, 86 By LIFE'S RIVER, Julius Andre, 87	HOLDS ALL	
This book is beautifully printed on good aper and handsomely bound in cloth. It	MUSIC.	OPENING VOLUNTARY, E. L. Ashford, 88	BOOKS OPEN	
ontains seventy-seven longer and shorter	Wedding March, - E. L. Ashford, 67	PRELUDIUM, Wilhelm Anacker, 89	Few music books are so pliably bound that they will lie absolutely flat on the	
ieces by twenty-four authors, American, erman, English, French, and Italian. As it ppeared in the OBGANIST from quarter to	PRELUDE, Ch. H. Rinck, 71 Adagio, Mendelssohn, 72	OPENING VOLUNTARY, - J. L. Battman, 90	music-rack. Great chagrin and mortification — not to speak of ill temper expressed	
uarter, it was enthusiastically received nd commended by musicians of the highest	PRELUDE,, Edouard Batiste, 74	VOLUNTARY, Wilhelm Anacker, 91 GRAND PROCESSIONAL, Wely	more or less sotto voce-may be prevented by this capital device, which we heartily rec ommend.	
tanding.	PRELUDE Geo. C. Richardson, 76	Arr. by E. L. Ashford, 92	PRICES: Nickel, 15 cents, 2 for 25 cents	
Price, \$1.50 per copy, postpaid.	IMPROMPTU, Will T. Davidson, 77	GRAND MARCH IN C, - Alfred Rawlings, 94	Nickel ornamented, 50 cents; Sterling Silver \$2.00.	
	Sweet Hour of Prayer, E. L. Ashford, 80	ANDANTE, Edward Redhead, 98		
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JULY, 1899.

EDITORIAL. THE POSTLUDE.

The Postlude, or closing voluntary, seems to be less a part of the service than the Prelude, and in consequence of this feeling, more liberty is usually taken in the selection of music for this number, which should, by right, be of a lively and cheerful character. It is the one piece in the musical part of the service that affords the organist an opportunity for a legitimate display of the power and variety of tone color possessed by his instrument, and one in which he has the right to feel a certain degree of pride, as it is the only number where he is not obliged to play a subordinate part, for though his support is all-important in anthem, hymn and solo, yet, (for the sake of good taste) he must seem to keep this support in the back ground, and make it as little noticeable as is possible. But in the Postlude, he is free to use odd combinations (bright or sombre) at his pleasure, not having to stop and think whether they are going to blend with the voices or prove too heavy for them. He is also at liberty to use more freedom in tempo, phrasing, shading, etc., as he is not following the lead of others, but asserting his own individuality, and giving expression to his personal taste and musical feeling; consequently he is justified in giving due thought to the selection of his postludes, and proper care to their preparation.

In selecting postludes, many organists make the mistake of using music of about the same style and character, so that the congregation get the impression that they are hearing pretty much the same thing every Sunday. A good vigorous march makes an excellent closing voluntary, but the strongly defined rhythm of the march movement produces a similarity in general effect

that is very misleading to the average listener, who is not capable of discriminating between the different melodic and harmonic progressions of a composition, but who falls into the rythmic swing by a sort of natural instinct. Consequently, it is wise to vary the rythmic form (as well as the general character) of the Postlude from Sabbath to Sabbath, if only to escape the accusation of "playing the same old thing every Sunday".

Many of the choruses from the well known Oratorios make fine postludes, as they possess dignity of style, rich harmony, vigorous contrapuntal form, and usually a fine climax and pedal point that bring out the force of the organ to its very best advantage.

A very reprehensible habit 'and one too frequently indulged in' is the use of the popular two-step march. which is not really a march at all, but a gay and lively dance form. Even at a wedding this class of music would hardly be in good form, and for the close of divine service it is altogether inappropriate. While so much good music is being written strictly for the organ, the intelligent and up-to-date organist will not indulge in the trashy two-steps that set the congregation to skipping down the aisle as if they were in a ball room. He will rather consider the sacredness of the day, the dignity of the instrument, and last, but not least, his own reputation as a musician of taste and judgment, and cling to the higher and more dignified forms for his closing voluntaries.

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Some Particular Uses of the Church Organ.

When we consider the resources and capabilities of the organ, to say nothing of the multitudinous modern devices for developing these resources and bringing them under the immediate and easy control of the player. we are forced to admit with Sir John Stainer that there is no instrument which "offers such a temptation to triflers" as does the organ, "for the obvious reason that an immense variety of tone can be produced on it by merely mechanical means." On the other hand, we must not forget that this very "variety of tone" and practially inexhaustible capability for the production of artistic effects renders the organ the favorite instrument of musicians aiming at a devout and intelligent expression of the act of worship in the language of the divinest of the arts. Hence, in our brief survey of some particular uses of the church organ, we shall find that while some of these uses are no better than abuses, others reveal a treatment be described as a swell organ minus a venetian swell-

of the organ commensurate with the dignity of the king of instruments and its exalted position in the world of worship and of art.

As a solo instrument the organ was practically unknown before the days of that Separatist persecutor, Queen Elizabeth, unless we make an exception in favor of the old *pulsator organorum*, who, with blows of his clenched fist upon the mediæval keyboard, heralded the approach of "the race of noisy accompanists," and established the first use, or abuse, of the church organ. And although the establishment of the anthem gave an impetus to organ playing, the accompaniments were, at first, mere doublings of the vocal parts. Indeed, according to Dr. Rimbault, in the verse anthem of the later Tudor and early Stuart periods, the organ was "only used in the full parts, viols, the precursors of the violin family, being employed to accompany the solo passages. But there were exceptions, e. g., Orlando Gibbons's Service in D minor contains a tenor solo with a four-part organ accompaniment, while an anthem, "How hath the city sate solitary," by Orlando's elder brother, Edward, commences with a four-part organ prelude. On this subject Dr. Barrett says, "In the organ loft at Magdalen College, Oxford, a book of organ music which lay long neglected, on being examined was found to contain some very florid accompaniments to the well-known service, Gibbons in F. It is supposed that the part was played while the choir sang, and the character of the flourishes was not unlike the extemporaneous descant which country organists were wont to indulge in not many years while accompanying the chants and psalms." Dr. Barrett goes on to say that these accompaniments resembled the virginal music of the Elizabethan period, and were, perhaps, attempts "to supply a florid organ part after the prevailing fashion as regards composition for the virginals." Other authorities are of opinion that these floriated melodies, accompanied by scale and arpeggio "business" for the left hand, were the first recognitions of organ voluntaries. If so, they constitute one of the first uses of the organ as a solo instrument.

It is a significant fact that the lowering of national morals is often accompanied by a lowering of artistic standards. This was the case in the post-restoration period. Organs were erected and improvements in their construction introduced, but the instruments and their advantages were degraded to the purpose of tickling the ears of depraved, dissolute and debauched audiences. Amongst other inanities of this and later periods were the so called "echo" and "cornet" voluntaries. The former abounded in frequent transitions from a more or less powerful combination on the great organ to a *pianissimo* on the echo organ. This echo organ may

a number of pipes enclosed in a box, and sometimes placed at such a distance or in such a position as to increase the contrast between their tone and that of the great organ. The "cornet" voluntaries were written to display the cornet stop, a compound stop from three to five ranks, generally placed upon the great organ, though sometimes found upon both great and echo. Some of these voluntaries have been described by Dr. E. J. Hopkins as "runs and twirls for the right hand, played in single notes, first on the louder stop (i. e., the cornet on the great organ, often, from its position, termed 'mounted cornet'), and then repeated on the softer (i.e., the echo cornet), the left hand meanwhile playing a soft bass."

The cornet voluntary flourished as late as the present century, where it appears, in 1812 (a century after the invention of the swell) in the voluntaries of William Russell, the organist of the Foundling Hospital. Russell, to preserve the echo effect, gave the direction, "the Swell Pedal not to be used in this movement." In Russell's works we also find the "Trumpet" voluntary. which consisted of alternations between the trumpets on the great and swell, accompanied by a soft bass and inner part on the choir. But, abuses of the organ as these were, we would rather hear them than listen to "the effeminate effusions of the lighter French school of organ-playing, with its tremulant, its vox humana et hoc genus omne." Nothing can be more irritating than the use of these pieces during an offertory after sermon, and it is to be hoped that the day will speedily dawn when. together with the "tawdry Americanisms" of our mission hymnals, they will be tabooed by all intelligent and cultured organists and congregations.

To John Christmas Beckwith (1759-1809), so called from his being born on a Christmas Day, Dr. Barrett attributes "the development of the organ part (of the anthem) into a sort of obligato solo." The earlier composers," says our authority, "confined their organ speech to simple accompaniments, at first identical with the voices, afterwards by the introduction of ritornelli, while Beckwith gave the organ independent counterpoint."

The accompaniments to the psalm-tunes during the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth were mechanical in the extreme, or else characterised by what Jeremy Collier described as "military tattoos" and "light and galliardizing notes," although in these terms the old non-juring parson was doubtless thinking of the "trumpet" and "cornet" voluntaries. But Collier is confirmed by his contemporary, Bedford, who, in his "Great Abuse of Music" (1711) thus writes: "But now the notes are played with such a rattle and hurry instead of method, with such difference

in the length of equal notes, to spoil the time, and dis- e.g., Henry Smart's Introductory or Middle Voluntaplease a musician, and so many whimseys instead of graces, to confound the ignorant, that the design is lost, and the congregation takes (sic) their time, not from the organ, since they do not understand it, but from the parish clerk, or from one another, which they could better have done if there was no organ at all. This makes many say that the organs, as they are now managed, do spoil parochial singing."

Certainly the organ-playing of the last century was not favorable to expression any more than Bedford declares it to have been to *tempo* for seventy years later, one William Gawler, in his "Harmonica Sacra' (1781), recommends the following "ready-made" style of expression : -- "When two verses are to be sung, they should both be played pretty full; when three, the first and last loud, the other soft; when four, the first and last loud, the intermediate two on the swell or choir organ, and the interlude immediately before the last verse, which makes a pleasing variety." Again in 1790, Dr. Miller, of Doncaster, the composer of Rockingham, suggests that there should be 'a short shake between each line of the old melodies, and a silent pause between each line of the new, where these do not break off the connection of the words." What with the shake and the pause-both of uncertain length-the poor congregation must have been kept in a frightful state of suspense, and anything like prompt attack must have been impossible. This shake or pause after each line was a common practice, as it is alluded to by many eighteenth century writers on psalmody. Gawler's mechanical system of expression received the sanction of so eminent a musician as Dr. Crotch, who, writing in 1836, recommends that "that the first and last verses may be played on the full organ. The intermediate verses softer, but not so soft as to form an absurd contrast." Dr. Crotch also recommended that in giving out a hymn-tune only the extreme (treble and bass) parts should be played.

The shake and pause developed into a formal inter lude, between the verses, more especially between the last two. Henry Smart said : "The way some men did it was this: they would hold on a chord in the left hand, and run up the scale and down again, generally ending on the wrong note." Riley, in 1762, complained that the giving out, with the interludes of two psalms, often takes up ten minutes." He also speaks of a voluntary of "more than a quarter of an hour before the first lesson." These abuses—for they were nothing more have fallen into deserved desuetude. But with them has disappeared a use of the organ which we would be glad to see retained. This was the middle voluntary which generally preceded the hymn before the sermon,

ries, the most beautiful of his Andantes. Even now, however, we have the extempore prelude to the anthem. In this James Turle excelled, one writer remarking that "in his preludes to the anthems of Purcell, Blow, and Croft, it seemed as if he were moved by the spirit of his illustrious predecessors." The extempore preludes of men like Wesley. Adams and Smart, were looked upon as a great treat. But here, again, abuses crept in, and indeed it is doubtful whether, except in the hands of first-rate musicians, extempore playing can be expected to rise above the mediocre in quality.

Space does not permit us to say much about any particular uses of the organ in German Protestant churches, but brief reference may be made to the interlude sometimes played after each line of the choral, something after the style of the orchestral interpolations between the different lines of the choral "Cast thy burden," in Mendlessohn's *Elijah*. It was this style of interlude which, when performed by the great Sebastian, "confounded" the congregation of the new church at Arnstadt. Davey, in his History of Music, says that in Germany it eventually "became the custom to play an elaborate prelude, which gave the orchestral instruments opportunity to tune up without disturbing the congregation. This prelude would be based upon the chorale, which was given out in long notes, with imitative passages twining round it."

In the Romish Church the organ often repeats the chant of the officiating priest in a varied and embellished form. Sometimes, as in the Cologne Cathedral, the cornet stop is used to accompany the voice of the priest when the organ is placed at a great distance from the altar.

Returning to English church music, it is evident that it there are no particular uses calling for comment, there are some writers who speak not altogether uneloquently of the abuses of the modern organ. Says a writer in the Church Times: "All through the Psalms the reeds crash, the pedals make a wonderful *obligato*, the sun rises, the frogs leap, the beasts roar, man goes to his labor, the organist sweats, the choir shouts, and every body is in ecstasies with the pomps and vanities of the performance." Our readers will note that this is a description of a High Anglican service, not written by an enemy, but appearing in the acknowledged organ of Ritualistic party. Before we act the part of the Pharisee we shall do well to make quite sure that the above description is in no way applicable to any part of our Noncorformist services. Then, even if our Nonconformist conscience allows us to emphatically negative such a suspicion, there will still be left plenty of time in which to thank God that we are "not as other men are."

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