The Scottish Metrical Psalter of 1635.

THERE is undoubtedly arising at this time a very great interest in the music of our Scottish Psalters, and the particular edition that is receiving most attention is that of 1635.

The Scottish Metrical Psalter was first published in 1564, and was, in all its editions, bound up with the Book of Common Order. It was the duly authorised Psalter until it was superseded in 1650 by the Psalter still used in our churches to-day, and of which a new edition, companion to the Revised Hymnary, is to be published this year. The popularity of the Reformation Psalters may be judged by the fact that at least twenty-five editions, but more probably thirty, were published between the years 1564 and 1644—that is, one edition practically every three years. The exact number of editions cannot be stated owing to the difficulty of deciding whether certain editions are new or merely reissues in later years.

Now, why should the edition of 1635 be more worthy of attention than all these others? Our forefathers, in their wisdom, never published the Psalter without the tunes, the first verse of each Psalm appearing directly under the notes of the music. In every edition previous to that of 1635 the Psalters contained *the melody only*. As the title-page tells us, the famous 1635 edition was published "with their whole tunes in foure or mo parts." It was thus the first *harmonised* edition, and so of greater interest from the musical point of view.

But there is another reason. The 1635 edition is the only one that is really available to-day for us, for it was very beautifully reprinted by Maclure & Macdonald, Glasgow, in 1864, the edition having been edited by a Minister of the Free Church in Ayrshire—the Rev. Neil Livingstone. Few copies of this Reprint are now to be had, but one may be consulted in the Library of the Church Offices at 22 Queen Street, Edinburgh.

The discussions in the Committee appointed for the revision of the Church Hymnary are no doubt responsible for a good deal of the revived interest in the Psalter, and it is good to know that there are no fewer than ten of its tunes in the new book which have never appeared in any

Scottish book—Psalter or Hymn Book—since 1644, the date of the last edition of the Reformation Psalter. Out of the whole Psalter there are, in the Revised Church Hymnary, altogether thirty tunes. One may well ask, why have we allowed such wonderful melodies to remain 'unhonoured and unsung' for almost three hundred years? Consider, for example, Revised Church Hymnary 460. Fortunately for our national pride there is an almost sufficient answer. The melodies in the Reformation Psalters are of a very varied metre to suit the rhythm of the versions. There are 99 Common Metre tunes, 11 Long Metre, 5 Short Metre, and no fewer than 27 other varieties varying from 4 lines of 6's (6666) to 6 lines with 12, 12, 12, 12, 10, 10. 'Every schoolboy knows' that the Reformation Psalter was superseded in 1650, when the 'new' Psalter, still in use to-day—sometimes called the Puritan Psalter—was duly authorised, "*and no other*," to be used in our churches. It was a fixed principle, upon which the divines of the Westminster Assembly worked, that every single Psalm should be translated into the ding-dong ballad, or Common metre—8686, in accordance with their fierce desire for uniformity.

It may be of interest to recall that, when the proposal was made for one metrical version to be used commonly in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, the House of Lords advised the Assembly to adopt Barton's Psalms, while the House of Commons advised the adoption of the version by Francis Rous. The Assembly decided upon the latter, the Scottish representatives agreeing, on the understanding that they would be allowed to 'edit' the version. The work of the revision was entrusted to four Ministers. John Adamson revised the first 40 Psalms; Thomas Crawford, Psalms 41 to 80; John Row, 81 to 120; and John Nevey the remainder. We have no information as to the musical abilities of these four Ministers, but we can quite fairly assume that they—with the traditions of the old Psalter tunes—would hesitate long when they reached the revision, let us say, of Psalm 25th, Psalm 80th, Psalm 100th, and Psalm 124th, giving instance of one Psalm for each reviser. For John Adamson had sung for many years Old 25th, which is, of course, a Short Metre tune, to the old version of the Psalm, and if he passed the Common Metre version for the Psalm, he would henceforth hear his favourite tune no more. It is fairly certain that these men consulted on the matter, and as Thomas Crawford had exactly the same difficulty

with the 80th—to which the tune Old 80th is of necessity a peculiar metre—10, 11, 10, 11; and John Row, his difficulty, with the Long Metre, Old 100th; John Nevey his with Old 124th, whose metre is 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, they must have reported their hesitation to the Church authorities, for a solution to the difficulty was found by including alternative versions. All the above Psalms are found to have alternative versions in the Puritan Psalter, with the exception of Psalm 80, the reason for this exclusion being probably the crudities of the rhyme in the old version. All the other versions were thoroughly revised by these four Ministers, and in many cases the original of Francis Rous is scarcely perceptible. The number of alternative versions is very small—twelve altogether, and most seem to have been included because of the popularity of the old tune. In the Psalter published with the Church Hymnary (1898), the only tunes that have not fallen out on the way of Psalter revision are—Old 29th, Old 44th, Old 81st, Old 137th, Old 100th, Old 124th, Old 134th, with two tunes "in Reports"—Bon Accord and Aberfeldy. (There were twenty tunes of this nature—"Reports"—in the 1635 edition.) It will be noticed that the first four tunes in this list are Double Common Metre, and so could have been used in the Puritan Version. These are 'all that was left of them'—left of well over one hundred tunes! And how many Ministers know even these tunes to-day? Those who do not use them, or allow their congregations to sing them, are neglecting music of the very first rank, great and dignified tunes, worthy of our traditional Scottish worship. It is a great mistake to think that they need big choirs to render them worthily. The melody is simple, and if rendered with the varied notes as in the Revised Church Hymnary, they are assuredly not dull. And all the tunes are Scottish *by long usage* and association at any rate. For almost one hundred years they were sung throughout the length and breadth of the land. From a casual survey of contemporary writings, the writer has discovered, in the brief records examined, that no fewer than fifteen of these tunes are mentioned merely by the way as being sung, one being Psalm 126, which looks the most formidable of all, its metre being 12, 12, 12, 10, 10.

We cannot tell who were the composers of the separate tunes. If their origin be French, as some have argued against their use, then so are the Old 100th, the Old 124th, and the Old 134th. The first four tunes mentioned above

are most certainly of *English* origin, Tallis being probably one of the composers. Possibly it is because the present versions of their Psalms are unsingable that we neglect these tunes; but why should they not be used for singable portions? At any rate there is no excuse for their continued disuse now, for the Revised Church Hymnary makes it possible for us to use these tunes to hymns. Old 44th is set—as it was in the first edition of the Hymnary—to a hymn that suits it splendidly (530)—"The Son of God goes forth to war." Old 81st is set to "O Lord of life and love and power" (355), and Old 137th has a National Hymn—"Great King of nations hear our prayer" (643). Old 25th will be found set to "For ever with the Lord" (583), while Old 29th has been omitted in the Revised Church Hymnary, but it will appear in the Revised Psalter set to its own quite singable Psalm.

Nearly all these tunes were reintroduced into Scottish use about the '60's of last century, when there was in Edinburgh an "Association for the revival of sacred music in Scotland," whose Director was T. M. Hunter.[1] Dr Lee, in his 'Order of Public Worship,' includes others—Old 8th, Old 23rd, Old 68th, Old 136th, Old 145th, as well as the others. But they did not all survive, unfortunately. They were reintroduced at an unfortunate time just before the beginnings of the series of Revivals of last century when Scotland lost its national character—musically at any rate, and the Sankey hymn tune worked its way into popularity. Of those that appear to be introduced now for the first time since the publication of the Puritan Psalter, the following may be noted—Old 18th, set to Christina Rossetti's hymn, "Sooner or later, yet at last" (586). The only change in this tune is the 'repeating' of the first line to make the tune of ten lines—8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6. Any congregation that can appreciate the hymn will certainly welcome this wonderful old tune. Old 16th is to be found at Hymn 486, where it is called Old 22nd, because it is set to Psalm 22 in the English Psalter. We ought to be grateful to the editors of the English Hymnal for rescuing so many of these tunes from oblivion, and the fact that they were actually in a modern and quite first-class Hymn-book was a great argument in favour of their inclusion in the Revised Church Hymnary. Members of the Revising Committee were in many cases

[1] See also Mainzer's Psalmody.

suspicious of the MS. tunes with which Mr James S. Anderson, lately the distinguished organist of S. Andrew's Parish Church, Edinburgh, so plentifully supplied them. But think of the tragedy of it! These old Scottish Psalm tunes had to be copied out by hand in the land of their adoption, and, in one or two cases, the land of their origin. They were not in print in Scotland, save in the Reprint of 1864. Illustration of this reluctance on the part of the Revisers may be given from the fate of Old 80th. It is most certainly a home product—more Scottish than the Old 100th, for Geneva cannot claim it. This tune was voted 'in' twice and 'out' twice, and it finally was set to "O word of pity" (97) by a very narrow majority. The argument that decided the doubters was the fact that such a hymn would only be suitable for a Good Friday service, and it was quite fairly urged that those who were not in the habit of observing that important day in the Christian year should refrain from preventing others who did from singing it to a tune of their choice.

Following the principle of naming as 'Old' only those tunes which are from the English Psalter, the Revisers named the tunes taken from the French Psalter simply 'Psalm so-and-so.' It may thus be inferred that they are not Scottish, but they are all to be found in the 1635 edition. Thus our 'Old 85th' is put down as 'Psalm 6.' This was the Psalm to which our tune Old 85th was set in the French Psalter. Owing to the difficulties of the feminine ending in the French versions, our Scottish musicians had to make some slight alterations in each tune. They are, on the whole, very slight, and cannot be compared to the great alteration that has taken place in Old 134th (St Michael).[1] Old 113th is 'Psalm 36' (68), Old 70th, 'Psalm 107,' Old 122nd, 'Psalm 3.' The following three have the same Psalm set to them in both Scottish and French Psalters—Old 110th, Old 118th, Old 130th, but appear as 'Psalm 110,' 'Psalm 118,' and 'Psalm 130.' Our Old 27th is named in the Hymnary 'Psalm 42' for the same reason. This one is referred to particularly because it should be recognised as the exception. It had appeared in Scotland before in the Scottish Hymnal, slightly disguised, and set to "Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness," and called "Coblentz." It is to be regretted that

[1] Cf. 'Handbook on Church Hymnary,' p. 47.

this tune is further mangled, and appears in the Revised Psalter under the name Geneva. It is a truly remarkable instance of a perfect melody, which remains beautiful, however rude the despoiler's hand. Vater Unser (Revised Church Hymnary, 459) is our Old 112th. It was, of course, also set to the Lord's Prayer. Greyfriars (Revised Church Hymnary, 645) is the second of the two tunes in the 1635 Psalter set to the 124th Psalm. It occurs nowhere else, and it is certainly Scottish. It is interesting perhaps to notice that this tune is set to Laurence Housman's hymn on the League of Nations. Greyfriars will, of course, never supersede its French companion as a tune for the 124th Psalm, but it is a wonderful melody and worthy of being sung by Scots folk who love their own country's tradition. The Psalm itself appears to be reminiscent of exultation over victory in war, and possibly many will welcome the quaint 'touch' of the Hymnary revisers which sets a League of Nations hymn to its companion tune.

There has thus been restored in all twenty-one of these Proper Tunes in the Hymnary and the Revised Psalter. There are many more well worthy of restoration. The Old 36th seems to cry out for restoration. It had a varied career in the Revising Committee. As its metre is 8.8.8.8.8., and there was no hymn of that peculiar metre in the Hymnary, the attempt was made without success to set it to " O Love that wilt not let me go," which is 8.8.8.8.6.

The exigencies of space will only allow me to touch upon the 'Common' tunes in the 1635 Psalter. They are thirty-one in number, and twenty-four at least are Scottish in origin. Of these thirty-one, only six can be said to be in regular use now—to our shame be it said. These are Abbey, Dunfermline, French, London New—originally called Newton—and Stilt—now called York. Winchester is included in the thirty-one, but it is of English origin.

It is a sad reflection upon our musical taste that we neglect the other tunes actually in our present Psalter with the very oldest traditions, such as Caithness, Melrose, Culross, Wigtown, Martyrs, Elgin, and there are not a few who love the historic dignity of the Scottish Church who will think the revision of the Church Hymnary amply justified even if it only reintroduces such tunes into general use.

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