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THE EARLY ENGLISH BALLAD AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CLASSICAL ENGLISH SONG

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY BALLAD

The ballad-singer of the twelfth century in England lived a story-book kind of life, when chivalry was at its height. Noble knights, men of wealth, even kinds wrote poems and composed melodies to praise of some fair lady or to recount heroic deeds and feats of valor. There were no newspapers to tell the current events, nor history books to record the past. There were no novels to excite the imagination, the ballad-singer did all these things with his songs, born of chivalry and romance.

Bard and Gleemen

This singing of ballads seems to be as old as the human race. According to Caius, the historian of England in 1913 B. C., the name, Bard, came from one of the orders of the priest-hood of Druids, in whose hands the entire culture of the nation seems to have been centered.[1] The Bards of the order of Druids were poets and musicians who sang in heroic verse the brave deeds and illustrious acts

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[1]William Vaughn Moody and Robert Moore Lovett, _A History of English Literature_, p. 9.

of their countrymen. Their standing was indicated by the number of colors in their dress. Kings wore seven colors, bards wore six, lords and ladies, five, governors of fortresses, four, officers and gentlemen, three, soldiers, two, and the people wore one color.[2] The bard recounted deeds of chivalry. With his genius, zeal and inspiration, he created the ballad. The gleeman, who did not create song, chanted what he learned from others. To these were added the minstrel makers or dancers who first danced to the songs of the bards. Later, all these were called minstrels.

The ballad singer was often attached to a court and was granted land and treasure. Often, he wandered from court to court depending for a hospitable reception upon the curiosity of his host concerning the stories that he had to tell. He was always welcomed and treated as an honoured guest.

The Two Types of Bards

Two very ancient bits of literature tell of their fortunes. One deals with the wandering bard and the other with the stationary singer. The first is the fragment known as "Widsith, or the far Wanderer". The poem opens, "Widsith spake, unlocked his word hoard he who many a tribe

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[2] *Ibid.*

had met on earth, who had travelled through many a folk."[3] Then follows a story of the princes that he had visited, an enumeration of the various countries that he had been in and of those who entertained him there. He sings of being in Israel, in Egypt, in India, with Caesar, and ends--

> .....Thus roving with song devices wander the gleemen through many lands.....ever north or south, they find one knowing in song and liberal of gifts, who before his court will exalt his grandeor and show his earl-ship; until all departs, light and life together.[4]

The second song is not so old. It is called "Doer's Lament" and in it the singer tells of his skill being eclipsed by that of another and as a result, his lord had taken his place away and given it to the other singer. The singer consoles himself by recalling how others had misfortune which must be borne and ends each rude stanza, "That he endured, this also may I".[5]

Influence of Each

These two types of bards or gleemen influenced the classical song of England as it grew out of the ballad, in the same two distinct ways. The court singer had a direct bearing on a long line of royal musicians who by example and precept brought in the "golden age of singing" in

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[3]Julian Hawthorne, et. al., The Masterpieces and the History of Literature, Vol., 1, p. 242.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid.

England. As early as the reign of Alfred, the Great, it was considered a disgrace to be ignorant of music. Alfred set the example as an accomplished performer on the harp.

Richard Coeur de Lion was well skilled in minstrelsy and poetry and greatly encouraged these arts at court. It was a song, so the story goes, that saved his life. While returning from a crusade, Richard was captured and imprisoned in Vienna, no one knowing his whereabouts for over a year. Finally his minstrel, Blondel, determined to find him, wandered over the continent, singing. Hearing of a royal prisoner at the Castle of Durestein on the Danube, Blondel hastended there and placed himself under the prisoner's window where be began to sing a song that he and Richard had composed together. When he finished the first stanza, Richard took up the song, immediately. Blondel had found his king. Hurrying back to England, he acquainted Richard's barons as to his whereabouts and his release by ransom was arranged. Whether this story is true or not, it took hold of the people's imagination and they sang the song for ages to come. While there is some disagreement as to the song, Percy's Reliques names it as "Your beauty, lady fair".[6] Another song credited to the same occasion is given in "The Story of British Music", beginning, "Fierce

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[6]Edmondstoune Duncan, Story of Minstrelsy, p. 61.

in me the fever burning".[7] To neither song has the music been preserved, Richard furnished the inspiration and encouragement for many a singer of songs in early England and the songs lived on. Even in Dante's Inferno, regardless of the misdeeds that got them in the infernal regions, Richard and his band are given high praise for the "perfection of their performances and the sweetness of their singing".[8]

Bluff Prince Hal who "played on almost every instrument and composed with skill", encouraged especially the singing of ballads and was followed by rulers of like interest. The tune, "Bluff King Hal" was a favorite for the annual May Pole Dance in the seventeenth century.

This interest of royal musicians brought about by court bards and gleemen reached its culmination in the era of classical music of seventeenth century England. Pasqualigo said of Henry VIII, "He plays well on the lute and virginals and sings from book at first sight".[9] Henry VIII loved the art and was a genuine composer. He was a master of the science of music, harmony and counterpoint and used his knowledge to add to the much loved ballads of his forbears. His body of court musicians was seventy-nine

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[8] When Every Gentleman was a Singer, Marion Snowden, Etude, April, 1936.

[9] Ibid.

and in the Chapel Royal he maintained thirty-two trained singers. Henry introduced several musical instruments from the continent.

The culmination of the development of the ballad into the classical song was reached in the reign of Elizabeth. She was a performer of no mean ability on the virginal and she encouraged music of all kinds. Warrants are found in which she stipulates that even children shall be trained in the art and science of music. Elizabeth's musical influence on the poets of the age, on the composers and arrangers of music, on the people, themselves, is shown in detail in the further pages of this paper.

But all the people of England were singing. This may be attributed, not only to the royal musicians and their example but to that other class of bards, namely the wandering singer, "roving with song devices....through many lands."[10] At the close of day, when men were at war or in peace times, they loved to be entertained around the camp fires by the singer of songs. As homes replaced tents, a singer was established as a part of the household, following the custom of kings. The wandering singer sang at fairs, especially the annual May Day Fair when laws were lax and Robin Hood and his merry men furnished entertainment for the people and new ballads for the bards. Every

[10]Hawthorn, op. cit., p. 242.

inn had its musician usually the wandering ones who came and went and brought news of what they had seen and heard. Up and down the streets, they sang of the crafts and fitted a song to every phase of life. So music came by the singer to all the people, who like the kings, took it up themselves.

The minstrels were condemned by the church. It was laid down over and over again that to give anything to a minstrel was equal of robbing the poor. In spite of repeated prohibitions, or perhaps because of them, these singing homeless outcasts found a home everywhere not excluding the monasteries.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BALLAD

Four Main Features

The ballad which the bard, gleeman of minstrel sang is characterized by four main features according to Oxford History of Music. First, a ballad originates with the voice, not with an instrument; second, its rhythm is affected by the words; third, it is not written down; and fourth, it is conceived as melody without harmony. The airs of English song were of a smooth and flowing nature, expressive, tender and sometimes plaintive, but generally cheerful rather than sad. There were airs of frank and manly spirit, often expanding into rough jollity. There were airs too long, narrative ballads, simple, usually plaintive, a peculiar feature being the long interval between each phrase for recitation and for catching the breath. So from ballad to song is but a step "such a step as one takes from the bustling crowd of street-life to the dim quiet of a cloistered library".[1]

From Monophony to Polyphony

The form of the early ballad was recitative of a type

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[1] Duncan, op. cit., p. 280.

designated as Monophony. This was a certain arrangement of consecutive simple sounds, individual utterances or melody. The singer cast it in metrical form of the ballad stanza of four strains. It is intuitive, oral, melodic and rhythmical.

Monophony, also called monody, came to mean music for a single voice. At the turn of the sixteenth century, accompanied monody appeared as a revolution, because of the previous supremacy of such polyphonic forms as the madrigal and the motet. There were two styles of monody, "stile recitativo and ariose". The more melodic "ariose" adapted to the ballad led to the supremacy of the classical song in England and was the forerunner of the opera.

In the next development of music, the singer by combining different individual utterances simultaneously and adjusting the mutual relations of the separate melodies, polyphony was born. The science of combining melodies in this manner is called counterpoint. If the melody was accompanied by chords, it was said to be harmonized.

Notation

Notation, with its two main features of expression of relationship in pitch or interval and of expression of relationship in time or measure, had been in the process of evolution from the seventh century, arriving at the four-line staff by the monk, Guido, in the thirteenth century.

Through the church, notation was handed down. Through the church, it came to England. The monks wrote the first music to the ballad. They were fond of admitting minstrels to their festivals, though forbidden, in this manner the monks became familiar with many of the romantic stories of the day. "The rhythm of the old alliterative Anglo-Saxon metre came naturally to one who was steeped in the rhythm of church Latin".[2] Chappell says of Thomas, Bishop of York, that "whenever he heard any new secular song of the minstrels, he composed sacred parodies on the words to be sung to the same tune."[3] The progress of harmony, however was aided in the highest degree by secular musicians, both minstrels and their successors. Secular music made much more rapid development than church music. The monks complained that because of the people's liking for light entertainment, the minstrels were often paid much better than they were. Many of the carols came from the monks, however, as they took the tunes of the minstrels and tamed them to the church. On the other hand, monkish hymns would be sung by a minstrel to more secular words.

Illustrations

In the illustrations of the ballads an attempt shall

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[2]John Murray Gibbon, Melody and the Lyric, p. 11.

[3]W. Chappell, The Ballad Literature and Popular Music of the Olden Time, p. 25.

be made to show the different types of ballads, first as they were sung by one voice, without accompaniment. Then in the section on composers of the seventeenth century, comparisons will be made in the classical songs, arranged by the several composers. As illustrations of the several types of song, there are lyrics, narrative, dancing, drinking songs and the carol.

May Day was the most important rural festival in early England and it is inseparably connected with Robin Hood. An old English proverb ran, "The first of May is Robin Hood's day". Endless songs and ballads concerning Robin Hood and his partner, Maid Marian, were sung. These ballads were straightforward and of bold rhythm with a sweeping melodic curve. They were written, no doubt, after the style spoken by Chappell as followed by early writers wherein "some melody already made is chosen, which is called the tenor and governs the descant originating from it".[4] The descant in the case of the Robin Hood ballads was usually a drone, showing its origin as a bag-pipe tune.

"A Little Geste of Robin Hood", printed in Fleet Street by Wynkende Worde about 1500 was one of the earliest ballads that was recorded. Robin Hood ballads were very popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There was an endless number of them and the stanzas to some of them

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[4]Chappell, _op_. _cit_., p. 26.

ran on and on until it seemed that they were limited only by the exhaustion of the singer. The theme for "The Beggar's Opera" was borrowed from these ballads and a number were used in it.

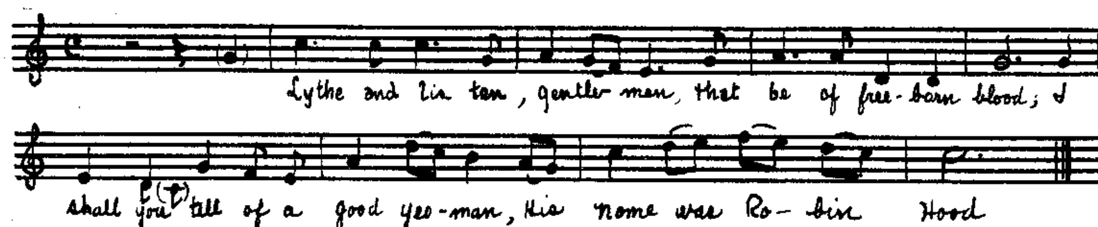

Fig. 1.--A Little Geste of Robin Hood

Another old ballad which was recorded in the fifteenth century was "Chevy Chase". The air to which this ballad was sung is one of the most famous in all minstrelsy and it was used for numberless other ballads. As "Flying Fame", it is given in Phillips' Old Ballads of 1732 as the air for a number of ballads about King Arthur. In "Pills to Purge Melancholy", a collection of ballads printed in 1719, it is named as the air for "Three Children Sliding on the Thames", of 270 verses. Richard Sheale, a minstrel of Edward, who died in 1594, recorded "Chevy Chase" after the manner of old poetry. The air was used by Shakespeare in Henry IV and by Beaumont and Fletcher in "The Little French Lawyer". It was used also in "The Beggar's Opera". The air was written to be sung to the accompaniment of the

harp. Chappell says that such ballads exhibit fewer peculiarities than those written for the pipes. The first harp pieces were a few simple chords. First the Chord, G C E and then that of B D F form the entire bass. Though from B to F is a "false fifth", it shows the knowledge that the harper derived from the church.

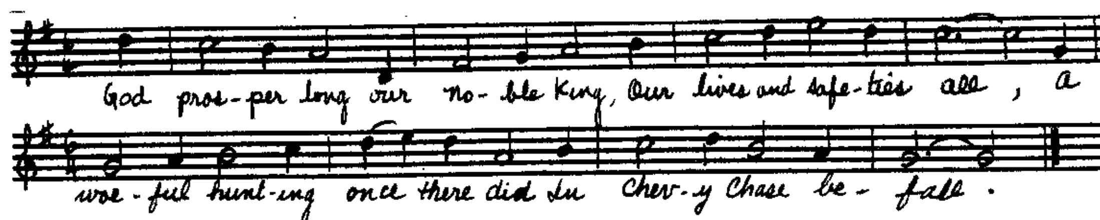

Fig. 2.--Chevy Chase

The ballad was closely associated with the dance as has been shown. The oldest dance known to which Chaucer made reference was the Morris dance. This dance was used for the English May Day games and as a part of all common pageants. "Greensleeves" was a ballad and dance tune that was a favorite with Morris dancers. Thomas Morley refers to such ballads as "songe, which being sung to a dittie, may likewise be danced". The rhythm of the ballad metre goes back to the original dance song measures. The compass of notes was the distinguishing feature from the ecclesiastical music. The compass of notes extended over the octave and descended to the seventh note below the key-note for the close, one of the most common terminations of English airs.

The church forbade the use of agreeable keys. The key of C natural was not one of the ecclesiastical modes and was called "the wanton key". It usually accompanied the dance tunes.

"Greensleeves" is an example of the dance tune and is found in every collection of English songs. It was used by many play writers, by political parties as a party tune and in "The Beggar's Opera".

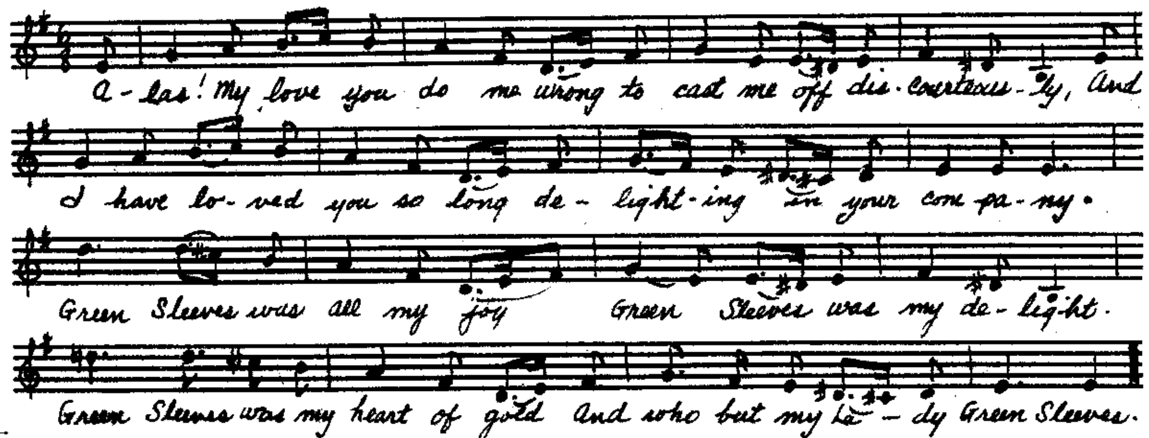

Fig. 3.--Greensleeves

"O Mistris Myne" is a ballad tune recorded by William Byrd which is an example of the lyrical form of ballad. The tune was found in print before 1600 and was introduced in Shakespeare's play Twelfth Night. It answers Sir Toby's plea for "a love song, a love song"[5] and the plea of every-one else as well. It has a trend to artistic design that

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[5]Ibid., p. 209.

is not found in the secular dance or the chant. More details are given in connection with the composer, William Byrd.

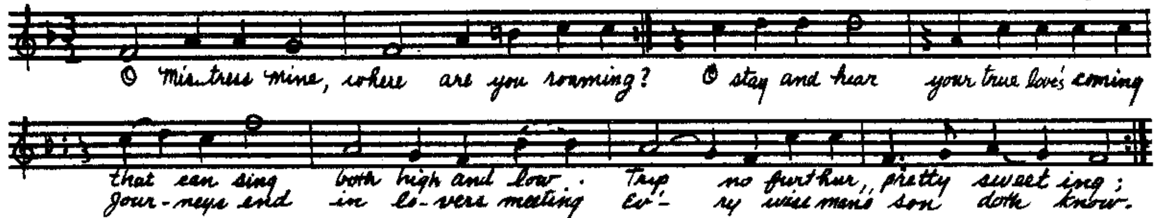

Fig. 4.--O Mistris Myne

"The Jolly Tinker" is an example of the large group of occupational ballads that were later used as drinking songs, catches and round by Shakespeare and others. Ben Jonson's play, "Tale of a Tub" which used all ballad tunes, called this ballad, "John's Ale is New". In the play, old father Rosin, chief minstrel of Highgate and his two boys play the dances called for, "Tom Tiler", "The Jolly Joiner" and "The Jovial Tinker". Tinkers were famous in song. "He that a tinker, a tinker will be", is one of the catches in the play, "Antidote to Melancholy". "Tom Tinker lives a merry life" and "Have you any Work for a Tinker" were sung in other plays. Ben Jonson refers to the tinker, "Here comes the tinker I told you of, with his kettledrum before and after, a master of music". Such catches were called "three-men songs" and in "The Winter's Tale", Mopsa says, "We can both sing it, if thou wilt bear a part, thou shalt hear, 'tis in three

parts".[6] These three-part songs were sung constantly by tinkers, tailors, blacksmiths, servants and clowns. The metre was the same as the dance tunes. The ballad was written for three equal voices, the second entering two bars after the first and the third voice, two bars after the second. Sometimes the third person stood in front of the other two and facing them. His music was written reverse to theirs and all used the same copy of music.

There was a jovial tin- ker who was a good ale drinker; He
never was a shrinker, be- lieve me this is true. And
he came from the Weald of Kent when all his money was gone and spent, which
made him look like Jack-a-lent, and Joan's ale is new. And
Joan's ale is new, my boys, and Joan's ale is new.

Fig. 5.--The Jolly Tinker

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[6] Ibid., p. 189.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIVE SONG OF ENGLAND

Typical Features

The song of England as it was developed seems to have escaped all continental influence. The development of polyphony was naturally affected by the works of Machault, the French exponent of the art, but side by side with the initiative work there is much that strikes one as English both in style and origin. For instance, the tune in most songs is in the tenor. The tune is melodic and straightforward, the cadence being formed by the second note of the scale descending to the final, whereas in the upper part, the sharpened leading note, "a polyphonic necessity", is habitual. Straight-forwardness is the characteristic that is typically English. This straight-forwardness is unique and often results in melodies which naturally divide themselves into four-bar phrases. Many of these songs show close connection with ballad and dance tunes and show traces of having been composed on dance rhythms. They even suggest, by use of repeated notes, that the words were written to be sung to dance melodies. These melodies were due to popular minstrels, while a later skilled hand added additional parts. This amalgamation of melody and

added parts resulted in style to reach its culmination in the singular outburst of solo music in the seventeenth century. This is evidenced first in the masques and miracle-plays. The feature which marks most strongly the difference between the English masque and the Italian version is the difference in the lyrical songs. In the English, they are complete but simple ditties. Their character is obviously derived from ballads. The English composer went through no tortuous process to arrive at concrete organization as, for instance, in the Italian aria. The ballad supplied organization enough and it proved infinitely greater elasticity and rich possibilites of immediate expression than the formal Italian. Such artistic little tunes as, "Back, Shepherd, Back", which is characteristically English formed the most definitely attractive point in the music of the masques. Chaucer was more interested in words than in music, though the ditees, roundils, balades and songs that are met in Chaucer distinguish the kind of song that came to flower later. Meanwhile, musicians were concerned more in experimenting with harmony than in the delights of melody. A period called Dunstable's century intervened and the lyrics of this period were written in two, three or more parts, "a concord less likely to survive in tradition than the folk-song melody".[1]

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[1]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 20.

Adherence to Early Ballad

We owe our understanding of what was sung in seventeenth century England to the composers of the reign of Elizabeth, who introduced the old ballads into their compositions. Little they cared about originality. Perhaps they felt that these tunes must not go unrecorded. They certainly recognized the "ideal" quality of real classical songs in the field of the ballad and they were exponents of the theory of a later writer who says, "at the root the musical quality of a nation lies the natural music, whole simplest and clearest manifestation is the folk-song".[2] Just as counterpoint in the church music began by adding parts to plain chant, so in secular music, composers began by harmonizing old tunes and florid melody came by variations on these tunes. It was long befre men had the courage to invent new melodies.

To quote from The English Ayre, by Warlock.

> Every editor of early music should regard himself as a steward of treasure and is required to be faithful in the way he keeps it or deals it out to others. No one would dare edit Shakespeare or Ben Jonson by replacing original phrases with modern cliches. But something similiar has too often been done to the composers of early music.[3]

The same book quotes the peom of Samuel Butler which he used as a prefix to the cantata, Narcissus.

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[2] Peter Warlock, The English Ayre, p. 135.

[3] Ibid., p. 140.

"May he be dammed for evermore
Who tampers with a written score
May he by poisonous snakes be bitten
Who writes more parts than what were written.
We tried to make out music clear
For those who sung and those who hear
Not lost or muddles up and drowned
In turgid pianistic sound;
So kindly leave the work alone
Or do it as we want it done.[4]

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[4]Ibid., p. 141.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SINGING

Place of Music

In the "golden age of singing", the master vocalist was so numerous a species that a poorly-trained singer seems to have been a rare exception. A technical equipment and mastery of style that are seldom met with today were in those other days accepted as a matter of course, anything else was in flagrant violation of the rules of the game. Music became a vital part of the life of all the people. Nearly every one could sing or play at least one instrument. The viol hung in the guest chamber. Every gentleman's house was equipped with a "consort of instruments". People sang not only in leisure time but as they waited turns at the barber's, or as they went about their work or even as they walked on the streets. Every trade had its song, not only the trades but every sport and amusement was identified with music and verse.

> The huntsman was roused with a merry stave; the milkmaid sang at her task the vintner had a embarrassment of choice. Nor had the devil all the good tunes, as the parson of old so feared. Many of the carols of the Nativity are true folk-songs. Then there were the

> occupations of the sea, love, war, and the simple duties of the shepherd or the risky livlihood of the poacher, each calling into existence melodies appropriate to their special purpose and use.[1]

They even had "hanging tunes" and the executioner performed his grim task accompanied with the voices of thousands in such a chant as "Fortune, my Foe, why dost thou frown on me?", used by both Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

The Poet's Contribution

Before naming composers of music of this singing people and showing how the classical song evolved from the ballad, it is necessary to give the poets their due credit and show the part that they played in directly influencing the composer of music and in furnishing words to the ballad tunes. Their attitude to music from the time of Chaucer bears fruit in this culmination of song. No poets of any country make such frequent and enthusiastic mention of minstrelsy as the English. Chaucer throughout his works, never loses an opportunity to describe and allude to music. He bestows it "as an accomplishment upon the pilgrims, heroes and heroines of his several tales or poems, whenever propriety admits".[2] Langland, the chanting priest, did more than he ever knew for the classical song when he sang "Piers Plowman", in the rhythm of the old alliterative

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[1] Duncan, op. cit., 253.

[2] Chappell, op. cit., p. 33.

Anglo-Saxon metre. His was the gospel of song, he would have his followers called "minstrels of the Lord".[3]

Shakespeare

Then upon the cultural scene of the seventeenth century came the poetical, emotional personality of William Shakespeare. Nothing reflects the importance of music at this period nor the influence of the ballad on the classical song as the vast number of references Shakespeare made to it in his works. Only one who loved music and thoroughly understood the scientific side of music could make reference to it with such unerring accuracy. Most of the music that he uses and mentions in his plays is from the ballad. Some of these are from books of arrangements that had been made already as Byrd's "Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book", but many were arranged by composers especially for his plays.

Shakespeare, of all the poets, makes the most consistent use of fragments and snatches of old traditional ballads. Twelfth Night is especially fruitful of these:

> If music be the food of love, play on:
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die
> That strain again! it had a dying fall.[4]

Shakespeare's philosophy of music is perhaps best stated in The Merchant of Venice:

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[3]Gibbons, op. cit., p. 13.

[4]William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, lines 1-4.

> The man that hath not music in his heart
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.[5]

Shakespeare's use of the song in his plays links him with the popular ballad tunes. He did not write of the sophisticated madrigal but of the "ayre", suited to the accompaniment of a lute. He makes the Duke say in Twelfth Night he "liked a song old and plain" such as--

> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
> And the free maids that weave their threads with bones
> Do use to chant it.[6]

He shows knowledge of an appreciation for the minstrel, as in The Winter's Tale, when the minstrel comes to the door and the servant says of him:

> He hath songs for man and woman of all sizes
> No milliner can so fit his customer with gloves;
> He has the prettiest love songs for maids,
> So without bawdry, which is strange.....[7]

In Twelfth Night, Shakespeare uses four ballads, O, Mistress Mine, Peg of Ramsay, Three Merry Men Be We and Hey, Robin, Jolly Robin. In Hamlet, the Gravedigger's Song is sung from "I loathe that I did love" to the tune of "Now Ponder, Well" or "The Children in the Wood". In Much Ado About Nothing, Beatrice mentions the "sick tune". This served its

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[5]William Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, lines 83-85.

[6]William Shakespear, Twelfth Night, lines 45-47.

[7]William Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, lines 191-194.

turn for a number of ballads. For Ophelia's "Mad Song" Shakespeare strung together three snatches of old ballads.

In the drinking songs, as in The Taming of the Shrew, Twelfth Night, and As You Like It, Shakespeare uses the old catches and rounds that were sung by the wandering minstrels at the fairs and taverns. Some of these had been collected in "Pammelia", the first book of music printed in England. Others were arranged for his plays by Arne and others. Some of these were "Jack, Boy, Ho, Boy", "Hold Thy Peace" and "What shall he have that killed the Deer". The chair in which Shakespeare sat in the tavern at Straford-on-Avon is pointed out today.

How much sympathy and understanding Shakespeare had for the old ballads is shown in the dialogue leading up to Desdemona's singing of the "Willow Song", in Othello.

> My mother had a maid called Barbara
> She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
> And did forsake her; she had a song of willow
> An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune
> And she died singing it; that song tonight
> Will no go far from my mind, I have much to do
> But to go hang my head all at one side
> And sing it like poor Barbara.[8]

The song itself follows, "The Willow Song".[9]

Shakespeare is said to have gone to the legendary seat of King Arthur's court and heard from the lips of the country

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[8]William Shakespeare, Othello, lines 26-33.

[9]Ibid., lines 41-49.

folk the name and doings of Puck before he wrote *Midsummer Night's Dream*. While Shakespeare had in mind, no doubt, the folk airs and what they might contribute to his plays, even he had no idea that the songs would become so popular a part of his plays. This is shown by tracing the development of the songs from the earlier to the later plays. In the first plays, the singers came on the stage to render the songs and were then withdrawn. Children who acted as well as sang were then introduced. With the appearance of Amiens comes a singer who also has a definite though minor part in the action, on to *Twelfth Night* where there is a thorough use of adult singers. The *Winter's Tale* develops the precedent set in *Twelfth Night* with more dialogue in the songs. The culmination is reached in *The Tempest*, where "the songs are so deeply embedded in the text as dialogue that it is unneccessary to stop the action to permit them to be performed for they are essentially a part of it.[10] Can we not see the development of the classical song in this same evolvement? "Who is Sylvia" the only song in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* must have had a good setting originally for the Host says "Hark! what fine change is in the music" which would be meaningless without a good melody to justify it. Leveridge wrote the music form the ballad and it is said to be scarcely inferior to Schubert's famous air.

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[10] Pitts Sanborn, "The Elder Singers", *The Nation*, Vol. 27, (August,1923), 11-12.

Beaumont and Fletcher

The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher used many songs based on the ballad. Robert Johnson arranged many of the songs for Fletcher, who cites ninety-two songs in his plays. He was steeped in ballad music of his day and seventy snatches of ballads are sung to the tune of Greensleeves.[11] The victim of an operation in "The Chances" by Beaumont and Fletcher has the ballad "John Dory" sung to him as an an-aesthetic.

Jonson and Others

In the masques of Ben Jonson, the ballads were used many times and Addison said of him that "he would rather have been the author of Chevy Chase than of all his own Works". In his, Tale of a Tub, he brings in Father Rosin, Chief Minstrel of Highgate, and refers to three popular dance tunes all connected with ballads, "Tom Tiler", "The Jovial Joiner" and "The Jovial Tinker".

Ben Jonson was the poetical father of Robert Herrick. Singing was a delight of Herrick:

> Rare is the voice itself; but when we sing
> To Th' lute or viol, then 'tis ravishing[12]

It is said of Herrick that he wrote his lyrics with a song in his head and his "Come Live with Me and By My Love"

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[11]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 126.

[12]Ibid.

clearly written to Marlowe's melody. His immortal song is "Gather Ye Rosebuds" with the melody by William Lawes.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to the classical songs from the ballad was brought about by "The Beggar's Opera". The plot of the opera was probably suggested to John Gay, the poet, by the career and capture of Jack Sheppard, a famous English highway man. It suggested Robin Hood and the plays and ballads that were cherished concerning him. Gay selected old English ballad tunes, sixty-nine of them in all, for which he wrote new words. He called in Dr. Pepusch, a London musician, to arrange them for orchestra. All the airs in the opera are folk ballads except one, "Let Us Take the Road", which Gay set to a march tune by Handel.

The plot concerns the career and capture of MacHeath, a dashing highwayman and faithless beau. He had numerous love affairs one with Polly Peachum, the daughter of an informer, another with Lucy Lockit, the daughter of a jailor. The opera takes its name from an old beggar who appears at the beginning and end as its supposed author. When this opera was presented, in 1829, Italian opera had been the vogue for ten years in London. With the arrival of this folk-opera, people of all classes flocked to it, deserting completely the artificial Italian opera. Ladies carried about with them favorite songs from the opera, written on their fans, houses were furnished with the songs on

screens. For six years that ensued after the production of Beggar's Opera, scarcely any other kind of drama was produced on the stage.

Handel

The success of "The Beggar's Opera" was decisive and catastrophic to George Frederick Handel, who had come to England and achieved great success with his operas. Several years before this time, he came to London from his native Germany after studying in Italy, and his operas in the Italian style were everywhere acclaimed. He not only wrote the operas, he ran the business end of the theaters and attended to details of technical nature. He organized the English Handel Society which published his works, a very lucrative business, also. "The Beggar's Opera" ruined his business, his operas and caused him to go into bankruptcy. He gave up operas altogether and turned to the writing of oratorios, as a result, his immortal "Messiah" was created. Many Englishmen seem to consider the Hallelujah Chorus a sort of national anthem to heaven.[13] Handel's later compositions show a direct influence of ballad, also. The sweet melody of "Largo in G" and the colorful jollity of "Harmonious Blacksmith" possess the happy spirit of the countrymen of the ballad. He helped make

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[13] Hendrick Willem Van Loon, The Arts, p. 495.

England conscious of her own music and deserved, no doubt, his burial in Westminster Abbey with all the pomp and circumstance due to his exalted position as music teacher to His Majesty George I.

The Classical Song

There is another trend which is peculiar to English song that should be mentioned before naming the composers of classical song. Music meant singing to the early English. The voice, the one voice to the accompaniment of the lute, harp or virginal, singing a ballad was the best interpretation of music. No nation had developed simpler and more dramatic ballads than the English. So in the days of great classical development of the song, the individual singer meant more than the instrumentation. This is true today in England.

Song collection seems to have been the diversion of kings from the time of Alfred. But few really ancient English songs were saved until the time of Tudor England. That the English had songs of great perfection is evidenced by the one composition, "Summer is Icumen in", an outstanding piece found at Reading Abbey. It is a masterpiece, one of the earliest examples of purely artistic music. Masterpieces are not produced without calling into existence a series of efforts leading up to the crowning work. The fine air and large degree of contrapuntal mastery which this

"six-men's song" contains cannot be accidental "it must have been preceded by hundreds of similiar compositions, or it could not have reached so high a degree of development".[14]

Early in the seventeenth century three song collections were assembled by Thomas Ravenscroft. They are "Pammelia", "Deuteromelis", and Melismate". For variety, age and excellence they are unmatched. "Fitzwilliam Virginal Book" is important to minstrelsy for many old songs are in this collection. The versions are pure though they have instrumental arrangements. William Byrd and Giles Farnably were masterly harmonizers of traditions melodies and they have many of this collection which they made.

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[14]Charles Francis Abdy Williams, The Story of Notation, p. 112.

CHAPTER V

COMPOSERS AND THE BALLAD INFLUENCE

William Byrd

William Byrd was a pupil of the famous church composer, Thomas Tallis. Byrd is spoken of as the "Father of Musicke" and no doubt laid much of the groundwork for the classical English song. He made song popular with his eight reasons to persuade everyone to learn to sing and his well-known couplet:

> Since singing is so good a thing
> I wish all men would learn to sing[1]

As we come to the fine body of genuine song, the delicate work of Byrd is typical of the peculiarly English product. This song of England of the delicate "atmospheric" type as it is designated by one writer, is analogous to the Shakespeare and the Herrick lyric in poetry. They are songs of great beauty when once the ear is accustomed to the old modal idiom.

The transition period of the ballad to the song comes with William Byrd. From ballad to song is but a step, but it is compared by Duncan to the step from the bustling crown

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[1] Gibbon, op. cit., p. 146.

of street life to the dim quiet of a cloistered library.[2] The authorship of "O Mistris Myne" was unknown but it is a good example of type of ballad that came out of the centuries to range themselves by the side of the melodies of the first composers to make the classic song. Byrd was "a melodist of supremem merit" and must have had more influence on the transition of ballad into song than any other one man. His arrangement of the song preserves all the melody of the ballad, with the accompaniment emphasizing the air. The song is known by the words which Shakespeare wrote for it for his play, Twelfth Night. William Byrd recorded it in the "Fitzwilliam Virginal Book". Comparison of dates show that Byrd had recorded the tune before Shakespeare wrote his play. William Byrd was taught in the church but using his knowledge as a foundation he originates a classic song for the one voice which is the distinguishing characteristic of his work.

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[2]Duncan, op. cit., p. 280.

Fig. 6.--O Mistress Mine

Thomas Morley

Other composers wrote "songs" from the ballads and in their own compositions showed the atmosphere, peculiarly English, in the apparent originality of the tunes thought out largely in the pentatonic scale. Morley's finely expressive little air to "It was a Lover and His Lass" is widely known and finds a place in all English song-collections that are representative.

Charles Burney doubts the originality of Morley's tune, "It was a Lover and His Lass". He says of Morley, "we often remember what we read without recollecting that we ever read it", a charitable apology for plagiarism. The polished and flowing melody suggests the material found in ballads but as in the case of Morley and Byrd, their compositions could be ranged alongside the ballads and many characteristics would be the same.

Thomas Morley, a pupil of William Byrd, sets forth the precepts of music and song writing in his "A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke". This was the first work of the kind to be written. The rules to be observed in "Dittying" are quoted:

> Use semitones to express languishing love, use whole tones, major 3rds. and major 6ths. for hardness and cruelty, minor 3rd. and minor 6th. are sweet. Distonic harmony is virile, chromatic harmongy, effeminate or sad. If the subject is light, use short notes, if lamentable, long ones. When the subject matter signifies ascending or high heaven, make the music ascend the scale, if descending depth or hell, descend the scale.[3]

It was a lover and his lass, with a hey, with a ho, with a hey non ne
no, And a hey - - - non ne no ni no. That o'er the green corn-
field did pass, In Spring-time, in Spring time, in Spring time; the
on-ly pretty ring time, when birds do sing, Hey ding a ding a ding, Hey

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[3]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 150.

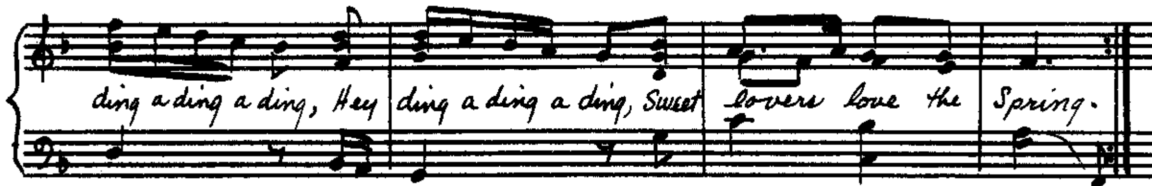

Fig. 7.--It was a Lover and His Lass

Donne and Dowland

John Donne, being the author of many verses, later set to "certain ayres", must be mentioned because of his connection with the composer, Dowland. Ben Jonson stated that Donne had "written all his best pieces ere he was twenty-five years old", and Izaac Walton says that most of his secular verse was composed before his twentieth year. Three of Donne's songs are specifically stated to have been "made to certain ayres which were made before".[4] Donne wrote his lyric, "Break of Day", as a sequence to Dowland's "Sweet Stay Awhile". Donne was later Dean of St. Paul's. Izaac Walton tells how Donne, as Dean, had his (Walton's)"Hymn to God, the Father" set to a "grave and solemn tune". Walton, after listening to the choristers render the hymn at the late evening services, made this remark:

> The words of this hymn have restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possessed my soul when I

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[4]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 153.

> composed it. And O the power of church music! That harmony added to it has raised the affections of my heart.[5]

John Dowland was a lute-player and also a very popular composer of songs which he assembled in the "First Booke of Songs or Ayres of foure parts with Tablature for the Lute, so made that all the parts together or either of them severally may be sung to the Lute, Orpherian or Viol de Gambo".[6] Dowland has a simple and unpretentious lyrical style that is characteristic of the classical song that typifies this era of singing. His homophonic writing was one of the influences that destroyed the true madrigal, whose essence is not that of an air accompanied, but of a number of real and equally important melodies imitating each other.

Anthony Wood describes Dowland as "the rarest musician that the age did hold."[7] In Peacham's "Garden of Heroical Devices" is a verse portraying Dowland's forlorn condition in the latter part of his life:

> So since (old friend) thy years have made thee white
> And thou for others hast consumed thy Spring
> How few regard thee, whom thou didst delight
> And far and near came once to hear thee sing!
> Ungrateful times, and worthless age of ours
> That lets us pine when it has cropped our flowers.[8]

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[5] _Ibid._, p. 154.

[6] Gibbons, _op. cit._, p. 155.

[7] W. Chappell, _The Ballad Literature and Popular Music of the Olden Time_, p. 128.

[8] _Ibid._, p. 129.

The galliard was a ballad used primarily as a dance tune. Chappell says that Dowland's "Frog Galliard" was the only tune by a well-known musician that he found used as a ballad tune. This shows how great was the influence of the ballad on Dowland and his contemporaries. When first published by Dowland in 1597, it was adapted to the words, "Now, O Now, I Needs Must Part", but in his latter Lute Manuscript, it is called "The Frog Galliard". The tune is closely wedded to the words, with skillful harmony. This shows the work of one who was an admirable singer and who, no doubt, added much to the charm of his own compositions. Chappell conjectures that Dowland first wrote the music as a dance tune and added the words later, however, since he was a singer of renown and wrote songs for the lute, the opinion of Duncan, that it first appeared as "Now, O Now, I Needs Must Part", seems to bear more weight as the proper conjecture. The song was so closely allied to the original dance measures of the ballad that it was used for that purpose, and Dowland so designated it. It is to be noted that this song is not at all in madrigal style, but is purely harmonic in structure. John Dowland takes a step further toward the English classical song.

Now O now I needs must part, Part-ing though I ab-sent mourn.
While I live I needs must love, Love lives not when life is gone.
ab-sence can no joy im-part, Joy once fled can ne'er re-turn.
Now at last des-pair doth prove, Love di-vi-ded lov-eth none.
Sad des-pair doth drive me hence; This des-pair un-kind-ness sends.
If that part-ing be of-fence It is she that then of-fends.

Fig. 8A.--Frog Galliard

Now O now I needs must part, part-ing though I ab-sent mourn.
While I live I needs must love, Love lives not when life is gone.
ab-sence can no joy im-part, Joy once fled can ne'er re-turn.
now, at last, des-pair doth prove, Love di-vi-ded, lov-eth none.
Sad des-pair doth drive me hence, That des-pair un-kind-ness sends;
If that part-ing be-of-fence, It is she, who then of-fends.

Fig. 8B.--Now, O Now I Needs Must Part

The Lawes Brothers

The Lawes brothers, William and Henry, became very popular with poets of their time. They studied in Italy, but upon returning to England, Henry Lawes sponsored, definitely, the idea of English words in songs, as just as suitable for singing, as the Italian. He wrote,

> And (I speak it freely, once, for all) that if English words which are fitted for song do not run smooth enough, 'tis the fault either of the Composer or Singer. Our English is so stored with plenty of monosyllables (which like small stones, fill up the chinks) that it hath great privilege over divers of its neighbors, and in some particulars (with reverence, be it spoken) above the very Latin, which language we find overcharged with the letter S, especially in "bus", and such hissing terminations."[9]

His popularity among poets was assured upon the composing of a burlesque song. He set to music lyrics by Herrick, Waller, Lovelace, Carew, Sir John Suckling and John Milton. Waller, for whom he set the lyric, "Go, Lovely Rose", wrote:

> Verses make heroic virtue live
> But you can life to verses give.
>
> You by the help of tune and time
> Can make that song that was by rhyme[10]

Milton's tribute to Henry Lawes is well known:

> Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just note and accent, not to scan
> With Midas' ears, committing short and long
> The worth and skill exempts thee from the throng
> With praise enough for envy to look wan;
> To after age thou shalt be writ the man
> That with smooth air couldst humour best our tongue.[11]

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[9]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 176.

[10]Ibid., p. 177. [11]Ibid.

The simple charm of the music written by William Lawes for Herrick's "Gather Ye Rosebuds", has won for it immortality. When William Lawes was killed by a stray shot at the siege of Chester, Herrick paid a tribute to his memory... all in this agree, Music had both her birth and death in thee.[12] The song, "Gather Ye Rosebuds", was originally in three parts; soprano, tenor and bass. It became very popular in ballad form.

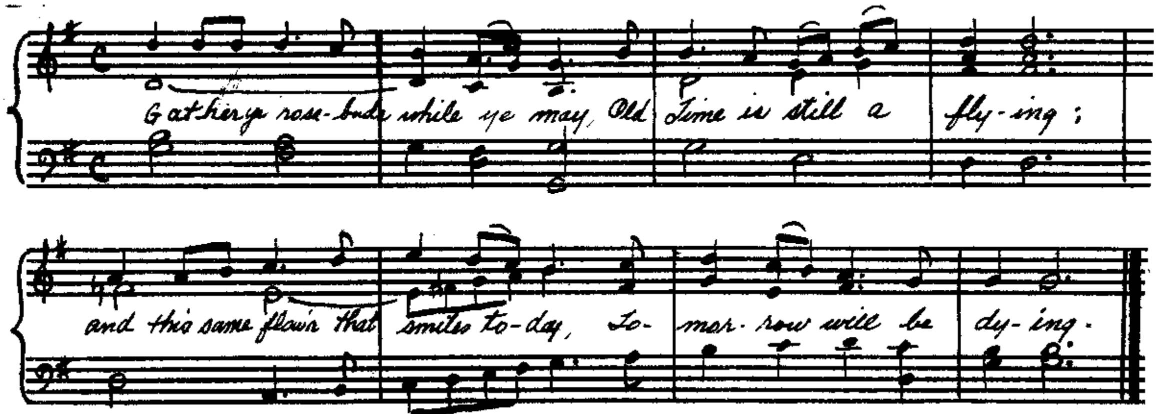

Fig. 9.--Gather Ye Rosebuds

Henry Purcell

The English classical song with all the influence that made it, came to its culmination in Henry Purcell. He wrote music for forty dramatic works. The one which is the best reference for this paper was his chief dramatice work, "King Arthur", written for Dryden's play. It abounds in songs,

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[12]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 170.

choruses and instrumental pieces. He was organist for the Chapel Royal for a number of years and wrote some very fine church music, such as the anthem, "Lord God of Hosts". The most popular tune that Purcell wrote was the air which became associated with Lard Wharton's "Lilli Burlero". Burnet says when the great revolution in 1699 was taking place, the whole army and at last, the people, both in city and country, were singing it perpetually. "And perhaps never had so slight a thing so great an effect".[13] Duncan says the words are not worth copying out but the air has a sprightliness and rhythmic grace that would easily account for its becoming a favorite. It is a description of the quality that the ballad gave to the song. Purcell's widow published "Orpheus Brittanicus" the year of Purcell's death. It is a collection of seventy-one of Purcell's compositions. Pieces such as, "I Attempt from Love's Sickness", was written with fine feeling and the melody glows with true invention. It is interesting to note an appreciation written by Burney in 1789. He says, "I Attempt from Love's Sickness" is an elegant little ballad, which, though it has been many years dead, would soon be recalled into existence and fashion by the voice of some favorite singer."[14] Duncan gives Burney's appreciation written in 1789, in which he hopes that this song would be recalled, and says it is curious reading when

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[13] Duncan, op. cit., p. 293. [14] Ibid., p. 291.

the song was so popular when Duncan wrote it in 1907. In turn, it may be pointed out that Duncan calls attention to the second melody-note of the last engraved line--D-natural--that is a flat leading note; whereas, all our modern copies sharpen the note. "One Hundred Songs of England", edited by Granville Bantock, calls attention to the fact that the melody and bass are preserved as written, so modern copies, as of today, return to Purcell's original.

In canon, fugue and all the contraputal devices of his time, Purcell was the follower of his Tudor forbears, but he goes a step further in that his ground-bass is almost identical with the one used by Bach in the "Crucifixus", in the "B Minor Mass". Purcell does not show the resource of Bach, but he makes fine use of the idea. It is remarkable that he wrote ten years before Bach's birth. Handel is said to have continued where Purcell left off. Purcell was the connecting link between Byrd, Morley, Lawes and Handel and his contemporaries.

This is a song by Henry Purcell; "I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly", as it appears in the book "Orpheus Brittanicus".

Fig. 10.--I Attempt From Love's Sickness to Fly

There are several composers connected with the national songs of England. Richard Leveridge, an excellent bass singer who loved to sing Purcell's songs, wrote a remarkably expressive and melodious air to "Who is Sylvia?" His popularity, however, probably rests on "The Roast Beef of Old England".

Henry Carey claims to have written "God Save the King".

Dr. Arne will be remembered for "Rule, Britannia" which Wagner found to sum up the English character. It takes its

place with the few really national tunes. Arne's setting of Shakespearian verse are as concert and recital material. "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind", "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Where the Bee Sucks".

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Music and Poetry from the Ballad

So we see music and poetry joined to make a unique creation in musical history, the English classical song. In his dedication to the opera, "The Prophetess", Purcell says:

> "Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledge sisters, which walking hand in hand support each other; as Poetry is the harmony of words, so Musick is that of notes; and as Poetry is a rise above Prose and Oratory, so is Musick the exaltation of Poetry. Both of them may excell apart, but surely they are most excellent when they are joined, because nothing is then wanting to either of the proportions; for thus they appear like wit and beauty in the same person".[1]

We agree with Purcell and yet we know it must be a certain poetry and music for this to be true. One look at the formality of the poetry of the next century with its aping of French and Latin, divorced from melody, brings us to the conclusion that it was no accident that the poets of the golden age were steeped in music. It was the influence of the early English ballad, first spoken, then sung, then joined in the happy culmination of voice and melody to make a song that is immortal and unique in music.

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[1]Gibbon, op. cit., p. 195.

The Unique Classical English Song

The English classical song is peculiarly native to Britain. Here are songs once sung to Virginals and lutes. Here are songs based on Celtic tales and Arthurian legend and the environs that gave them birth. Here is a music that has no kinship with German romanticism, Russian idealsim, French impressionism or Italian melodrama. It roots in the mystic elements of ballads and nature. It flowers in the rich lyricism of Tudor England.

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