

King of Sweden conferred on her a gold medal attached to the ribbon of the Order of the Seraph. No one despises these distinctions, but all must esteem more the universal testimony to a well-spent life given over the fresh grave of Jenny Lind. May she rest in peace.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

THE Carols of Christmas represent a form of literature derived from many sources, which has been transmitted through successive ages to the present. The marks of the usage to which they have been subjected, the influences which have been brought to bear upon their character in the course of generations, may be traced in the specimens known to belong to particular periods, and an idea of their origin may be gathered by inherent proofs furnished in the carols themselves.

Carol-singing is so common in the present day, and the number of carols is so large, that few people who sing them take any trouble to enquire as to their origin or peculiarities. Much has been written concerning them, so that there is little difficulty in the way of those who wish to become acquainted with their history and peculiarities. The peculiarities speak for themselves to those who care to give the matter any attention. The history, as usually related, is confined for the most part to certain of the carols. This is not without a special interest, but the researches of the many painstaking writers have as yet been confined to certain specimens contained in collections intended to promote the cultivation of certain methods of thought.

There are carols for all the chief festive seasons of the year—for the Epiphany, for Easter, for Whitsuntide, and for Christmas—but the tide of popularity has set in favour of those belonging to the last-named season. This fact is curious as showing the tenacity of popular habits, even though they be followed unthinkingly. There is every reason to believe that the custom of singing carols is derived from a pagan origin. Many of the songs betray the influence of paganism running like a weft through the woof of Christian teaching. The mixture of images and illustrations further points to the unconscious adoption of heathen references to emphasise Christian teaching, thereby implying a concession to popular thoughts. Some of these references are Celtic, some are Scandinavian, some are Roman, some are Christian, and many deal with apocryphal Christian legends. There is plenty of evidence to show that the manner of celebrating the season of Christmas in the present day is only a continuation of practices observed long before the Christian era. The custom of decorating the churches with evergreens, of houses with rosemary, bays, and mistletoe, and so forth, is Druidical or Celtic in its origin. The carrying of the "Vessel Cup" from house to house in the days before Christmas is Scandinavian, the custom of drinking "Wassail," brought into prominence by the Saxons and Danes, also comes from the old Teutonic observances. To the same source also may be referred the Hagmena song, still to be heard in remote parts of Yorkshire and Scotland, the burning of the Yule log, the continuance of the very name of Yule for Christmas. The Kentish custom of "going a Hodening" has been associated with Woden. In the observance of this, a party of young people carried the head of a dead horse on a pole. The horse is the emblem of the county of Kent, and was one of the Saxon objects of reverence. The villagers now have substituted carol-singing for this practice, and still call their carolling "going a Hodening." The "Lord of Misrule" is probably a relic of the Roman Saturnalia, when,

among other matters, the servants occupied the place of the masters for a time. The election and reign of the Boy Bishop is another form of the like custom. The children of the choir were invested with ruling powers from the day of St. Nicholas to that of the Holy Innocents (December 6th to the 28th), and elected a Bishop. During the above-mentioned period all, great and small, obeyed his commands. There is in Salisbury Cathedral the monument of a Boy Bishop who died during his Episcopate. In Magdalen College, Oxford, at the carol-singing on Christmas Eve, it was, and may still be, the custom for the choristers to sit at the high table at supper while the Fellows of the College waited upon them. The hunting of the wren in Ireland on St. Stephen's Day, the hunting of owls and squirrels in Suffolk, the sword dance, the plough dance, the morris dances on Plough Monday—the Monday after Twelfth Day—and other customs associated with carol-singing are of heathen origin, and have become tempered by Christian teaching.

The word "carol" conveys a specific idea to the minds of most men, there is however only a general notion as to its exact meaning, and but a conjectural knowledge as to the origin of the term. Many words have been suggested as the supposed roots, all more or less ingenious if not accurate. The Rev. Henry Ramsden Bramley, of Magdalen College, the latest scholar who has turned his attention to the subject, in a preface to a collection of carols edited by himself and Dr. Stainer, says "that the Rev. Arthur Bedford, who published a version of the carol entitled 'A Virgin unspotted,' in the last century, gives his readers to understand that the name 'carol' is derived from Carolus, the Latin for Charles. 'A Christmas Carol,' he says, 'because such were in use in the reign of King Charles I.' But although it is easy to show from writers who died before Charles I. was born, by whom the word 'carol' is used in a sense similar to that which it bears at present, that this is not the true derivation, it is by no means easy to give an account of the real origin of the term." With regard to this derivation, it may be said further that Bedford did not invent the idea, because other writers have stated their belief that the word "carol" was first applied to a song by one Charles Duc d'Orleans, who was made prisoner on the field of Agincourt (1415). This derivation, however, is not quite correct, as the word was in use long before.

"It exists, not only in English, as early at least as the fourteenth century, but also in French, in Italian, in German, in Welsh, and in the Celtic dialects of Brittany and the Scottish Highlands."

The word "Choral" for a hymn-tune is doubtless traceable to the same source. The Rev. William Barnes, author of "Notes on Ancient Britain and the British," and of many other works, including some most beautiful poems in the Dorset dialect, states his opinion, in the work whose title is above referred to, that the root is neither Latin nor Teutonic, but Celtic, "and may have gotten into French and Italian, like some other words, from the speech of the Gauls."

There is the word "Carawl" in Welsh, which signifies a song, and "Carawl-Kaf" a May song. Among the relics of the Celtic-Cornish language there are some Christmas Carols which were written while the language was commonly spoken, and this must have been before the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At that period the significance of the word was pretty firmly established in the sense in which we now employ it—namely, as a song of joy and exultation. Thus in Spenser's "Epithalamium," we read:—

And let the graces dance unto the rest,
For they can do it best.
The whiles the maidens do their carol sing,
To which the woods shall answer and their echoes ring.

Lord Bacon in his essay "Of Adversity" says: "Even in the old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols." Shakespeare and Milton regard the carol as a song of devotion, for the former says:—

No night is now with hymn or carol blest,

and the latter:—

They gladly thither haste, and by a choir
Of squadroned angels hear this carol sung.

There are other derivations suggested which may be mentioned as having been put forward and adopted by various writers—namely, *Carolla*, from dancing in a round; *Choras Corea* and *choreola*, from having been danced to, sung in conjunction, or accompanied upon the bagpipes, one of the old names for that primitive instrument being *Corus*. Then there is the Saxon word *Kyrriole*, a modification of the Greek words *Kyrie eleison*, each and all or either of which may be accepted or rejected according to fancy.

The most convenient definition of the word is that which best fits the character it has attained—namely, a sacred ballad. When carol-singing formed part of the old customs observed at Christmas, it was usually performed by the Mummings, who visited the houses of the people of the better sort, and gave a rude representation of "St. George and the Dragon," "Robin Hood and his merry men," or some other semi-dramatic performance, which was a traditional relic of some older form of exhibition derived from the sword-dance, the mystery-play, the morality, or the masque. The sword-dance is of Scandinavian origin, the mystery-play and the morality date from mediæval times, and the masque may be referred to the renaissance period of our history.

It is generally admitted, as before-stated, that many of these old Christmas customs were a combination of the practices observed at the time of the Roman Saturnalia, the winter festival of the Druids at Christmas, and the northern feast of Yule. The burning of the Yule log marks the winter Solstice, as the Beltane fires at midsummer do the period of the days of the summer Solstice, and point to the ancient worship of the sun. We cling to old customs with remarkable tenacity, without knowing the why or wherefore, and display the influences which have been at work upon us as a nation from the earliest times, by the retention of ceremonies which exhibit those influences quite as plainly in our habits, as the use and existence of certain words in our speech show the source from whence they are derived to the student of philology.

It has been asserted by Mr. Baring Gould in his preface to Mr. Chope's collection of "Christmas Carols for use in Church," that carols owe their origin to those representations of the Holy Manger which were first introduced by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223, and which are still used in Roman Catholic and some Lutheran Churches. If this were the case, the oldest carols we possess would be of a religious character, which is not so. There is in the British Museum (MS. Reg. 16) a carol in the Anglo-Norman dialect, believed to have been written in the thirteenth century, which makes no allusion to the Nativity, but enlarges upon the customary hospitality of the period, ending with the words *Wassail* and *Drinkhail*, the usual Saxon toasts. That carols were sung by Christian communities in early times the Hymn by Prudentius written in the fourth century has been quoted to prove. Thus it commences:—

Quid est quod arctum circulum
Sol jam recurrens deserit
Christusne terris nascitur
Qui lucis auget tramitem?

Bishop Jeremy Taylor, when he calls the song of the heavenly host in the fields of Bethlehem the earliest Christmas Carol, thus teaching the Church a hymn to put into her offices for ever in the anniversary of this festivity, would seem to claim a high original for the custom. It is, however, much more likely to be derived from the custom of uniting piety and mirth at the time of Christmas, a custom as laudable as it is universal among Christian people.

One of the duties of the gentlemen and children of the Chapel Royal in time past was to sing carols at Court, and also to act in the masques or plays which were usually given at the Christmas season. In the regulations for the household of Henry VII. there are particular directions given concerning this matter. In the third year of his reign—namely, in 1487, when the king kept Court at Greenwich at Christmas and on Twelfth Night—Leland tells us that "they of the Kings Chappell, after the first course, sang a carall." The like custom was observed in the time of his son King Henry, himself no mean musician, and therefore likely to encourage the practice. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth the fashion existed in unabated use.

An elaborate description of Christmas customs was printed in 1607, when Prince Henry, the son of James I., was entertained with great pomp and circumstance at St. John's College in Oxford.

In "good King Charles's golden days" an order existed directing the nobility and gentry who had mansion-houses in the country to repair to them for Christmas, to keep hospitality meet to their degrees. As Puritanism became more powerful, the observance of Christmas was suppressed by authority in England, as it had been in Scotland in 1555, nearly a hundred years before. In 1647 it was ordained in Parliament that the feast of the Nativity of Christ, with other holidays, should no longer be observed, and by another order, dated December 24, 1642, the singing of carols was voted superstitious, and the Parliament directed "that no observation shall be had of the five-and-twentieth day of December, commonly called Xmas day, nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof."

Although forbidden by Act of Parliament, the Christmas customs and festivities were still observed and continued in remote country places. Even in Scotland, where the custom of carol-singing seems never to have taken kindly root, the prohibition was not entirely successful. In 1582 there was issued an Act of the Scottish Parliament against "singing of caralles" within and without kirks, at certain seasons of the year, and observing "sik uthers superstitious and papistical rites." From that time, however, the welcome Christmas received in England has been reduced in stateliness, importance, and universality, until about half-a-century ago, when the observance of carol-singing, among other customs, had almost died away. William Hone, in his "Ancient mysteries described," published in 1823, laments the decay of carol-singing in his time, and also that no one had taken the trouble to collect these relics of the past. In the list of Chap-books printed and published in Aldermary and Bow Churchyard in the eighteenth century, not a single collection of carols is to be found in the list. Allusions to carol-singing are to be found in such books as "Round about our coal fire," but particulars are wanting. Collections of carols are not numerous. Mr. Sandys was not the first to give to the world a selection of these simple lyrics, for Mr. Davies Gilbert published a collection of Ancient Christmas Carols, with the tunes to which they were commonly sung, and although each collection is of an unscientific character, they form together the basis of our modern knowledge of the subject. Before this time there

was a collection printed in the year 1531 by Wynken de Worde, of which only one leaf has been preserved. This was rescued by Hearne, the antiquary, and purchased at his death by Dr. Rawlinson, who bequeathed it to the Bodleian library. There are two carols upon the precious leaf, one a "Carol of Huntyng," from the "Boke of St. Albans"; the other, "A Carol, bringing in the Bore's Head," which is annually sung at Queen's College, Oxford, on Christmas Day.

Dr. Bliss, of Oxford, also printed a sheet of Ancient Carols for private distribution at the beginning of this present century; Ritson gave a few in his "Antient Songs and Ballads," 1782; there are others in Warton's "History of English poetry," in Douce's "Illustrations to Shakespeare," in Dunbar's "Antient Scottish poems," and other works of the past. The revival of the custom of carol-singing in churches and elsewhere during recent years has given rise to a great many works on the subject containing carols of antiquity and of modern days, with or without the proper musical notes. The chief of these are Sedding's "Antient Goodly Carols and Carols for Christmas-tide," Helmore's "Carols for Christmas," Husk's "Songs of the Nativity," Silvester's "Christmas Carols," and Stainer and Bramley's excellent collections.

An exhaustive account might be written upon the history of the various popular carols, pointing out the meaning of certain of the allusions therein contained, their philology, bearing, and purpose. The carol "God rest you merry, gentlemen," is one of the best known by all classes. It is so familiar as to be called by many *the* Christmas Carol, as if there were no others. Like most things commonly known and liked, all record of its history or the date of its production is a mystery. Judging by the character of the words, it would seem to belong to the latter part of the last century. The melody of this carol is one of the old tunes which, in the last century, were sung to the "affectionate copy of verses" which a condemned criminal was supposed to have written as an appendix to "his last dying speech." Before the days of cheap newspapers these things were much sought after by the common people as the source of presumably exact information on a subject of considerable interest. Many of the most popular of the carols still extant are sung to airs which have been pressed into a like dismal duty from a remote period. Some of them possess a singular beauty, which becomes the more apparent when dissociated from the "hangman's verse" with which they were formerly connected.

Among the carols distinctly traceable to a distant period of history is the one called the Coventry Carol, because it was sung in one of the mysteries famous from having been performed in that town by the company of Sheremen and Taylors on the festival of Corpus Christi, the Thursday next after Trinity Sunday. These mysteries were usually acted in churches or chapels upon temporary scaffolds.

The burden "lullay," which appears in the Coventry Carol, is employed in other carols of old date; there are two of the time of Henry VII. printed in Mr. Husk's "Songs of the Nativity," one which commences—

This endris night I saw a sight,
A star as bright as day,
And ever among a maiden song,
Lullay, by-by, lullay.

This has found its way into more recent collections of carols. The second, which is taken from Byrd's "Psalms, sonets, and songs of sadness and pietie," was first printed in 1587 with the music.

The antiquity of the carol "Nowell, nowell," is

beyond all question. It is contained in a MS. written in the reign of Henry VI., formerly in the possession of Mr. Thomas Wright. It is there set to sacred words, beginning—

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
This is the salutation of the Anguell Gabryell.

There is a note appended in the MS. to this effect:—"This is the tewyn for the song foloyng, yf so be that ye wyll have another tewyn, it may be at your plesure, for I have set all the song."

The "song foloyng" is a drinking song, the words of which are so quaint, that their appearance here may be excused:—

- Bryng us in good ale, good ale,
For our Blyssyd Lady sake,
Bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us in no browne bred, fore that is made of brane,
Nor bryng us in no whyt bred, fore therein is no gane,
But bryng us in good ale, good ale,
And bryng us in good ale.
For our Blyssyd Lady sake,
Bryng us in good ale.
- Bryng us in no befe, for ther is many bonys,
But bryng us in good ale, for that goth downe at onys.
 - Bryng us in no bacon, for that is passing fate,
But bryng us in good ale, and gyfte us i nought of that.
 - Bryng us in no mutton, for that is often lene,
Nor bryng us in no trypes, for they be syldom clene.
 - Bryng us in no eggys, for ther ar many schelles.
But bryng us in good ale, and gyfte us no [th]yng ellys.
 - Bryng us in no butter, for therin are many herys,
Nor bryng us in no pygges flesch, for that wyl mak us borys.
 - Bryng us in no puddynges, for therin is al godes good,
Nor bryng us in no veneson, for that is not for our blod.
 - Bryng us in no capons flesch, for that is ofte der,
Nor bryng us in no dokes flesch, for thei slober in the mer.
But bryng us in good ale, good ale, and bryng us in good ale;
For our Blyssyd Lady sake, bryng us in good ale.

By this it may be seen that the old festive carol was still in favour in the fifteenth century. The existence of the graver words side by side with the more humorous—the same tune being common to both—may indicate the writer's adoption of the principles which led to the Reformation later on. The solemnity of the melody intensifies the drollery of the words. The "tewyn" is in Sedding's collection, and in "Christmas Carols new and old" ("Noël, noël"), harmonised by Dr. Stainer.

The carols in "Macaronic Verse," a mixture of the vernacular with Latin, of which "Christo paremus canticam, excelsis Gloria" (When Christ was born of Mary free), "In dulci jubilo," and others are fair samples, are the production of the early part of the sixteenth century. Other generations have other treatment of carols. The contrasted lines of Latin and ordinary speech gave way to a purer diction.

Some of the carols, such as that of "The Incarnation" in Stainer and Bramley's collection, now popular, have modern words with tunes which may be old. This is certainly as old as the time of Queen Elizabeth. "Jacob's Ladder" is associated with a traditional melody of greater antiquity than the words. It is doubtful if these words are very old, they are not conceived in the spirit of the old carols, and the expressions are too smooth and polished to have emanated from any "rude bard." The tune dates from the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is a slight variation of the melody called "Balance a Straw," which was a favourite dance tune at one time. The carol is popular in Devon and Cornwall. There is no doubt that the chorus after each verse possesses characteristics, especially in the form and expressions used in the chorus, which may be referred to the hymns popular among the religious portion of the mining population of some parts of those counties. There is a large number of carols popular in the West Country, many of which are printed in Sandy's collection, and many as yet not gathered from among

the folk with whom they are annual favourites. Among these popular beyond the confines of the West is the carol "A Virgin unspotted." There are several versions of it, and the variations are sufficiently marked as to have led some collectors to classify and enter them as distinct carols. Hone has done so. There are also considerable differences in the chorus which concludes each verse. This was the carol which induced the Rev. Arthur Bedford to give his very curious definition of the word. Mr. Husk says that there are certain expressions in this carol which convey the idea of its possessing some claim to be called ancient.

The melody to which this is usually sung, is another of the "last dying speech" tunes which were at one time well known as such, but now are almost forgotten. Whether they were first set as Christmas Carols or, being popular, were adapted to semi-sacred words, is too subtle a question to enter upon now. It will be enough to mention that the union of secular tunes with words of sacred import is to be traced a far way back. Shakespeare notices this in his "Winter's Tale," when he says that there is "but one Puritan among them, and he sings Psalms to hornpipes." In 1642 a volume was published under the title of "Psalmes and songs of Sion, turned into the language, and set to tunes of a strange land, by W(illiam) S(later), intended for Christmas Carols, and fitted to divers of the most noted and common but solemn tunes, everywhere in this land familiarly used and knowne." Upon the copy preserved in the British Museum, a former possessor has written the names of some of the tunes to which the author designed them to be sung; for instance, Psalm 6 to the tune of "Jane Shore," Psalm 10 to "Bara Foster's dreame," Psalm 43 to "Crimson Velvet," Psalm 47 to "Garden Green," and Psalm 84 to "The Fairest nymph of the Valleys." "Green Sleeves," a tune mentioned by many of the Elizabethan poets in a way which shows that its associations in those days were not so respectable as they are at present, has also been used as the melody for more than one Christmas Carol. Spiritual songs constructed upon this principle, namely,—that of giving a common and often abused melody to words of devotional import, are not peculiar to this country. The tunes sung to Clement Marot's translation of the Psalms into French were common folk-tunes. The version of the Psalms, adopted for circulating the reformed opinions in Scotland 300 years ago, were treated in like fashion—"Gude and godly ballates changed out of prophane songs," as they were called. In Holland and Flanders, at the same period, a like version was used, as is shown in the Collection called "Souter Liedekens," 1511; and in Italy such things were not rare. It is well known that Palestrina used the melodies of the most questionable ditties as the themes for the counterpoint of his motetts and other sacred music.

Carols called spiritual or devotional are very numerous, and contain special points of interest in subject and versification. There is also another class, the narrative carols, which may lay claim to as great if not to a greater popularity, especially with the humbler classes, the sequence of a story, rather than the subtleties of theology, having most charms for those who professedly possess "no head for such high thoughts." "The First Nowell," which heads this list, is almost as popular as "God rest you merry, gentlemen," but, unlike that carol, it has never been considered worthy of the dignity of preservation or promulgation by means of the broadside. It was first printed in Davies Gilbert's collection, and next in Sandys' collection, in both cases being given as a West Country Carol. There are two versions of the

tune to which this carol is sung, one of especial beauty of melody, the other a sort of perversion of an ecclesiastical tone, interesting, perhaps, but not pretty. The word Nowell (Noël), which occurs so frequently in these old carols, is the French for Christmas, and also for a Christmas Carol. As it has been occasionally used as a cry of joy, without any reference to Christmas, some writers have attempted to trace it to a source unconnected with Christmas. Mr. Bramley says:—"Novellæ, meaning news, and Yule or some similar word have been suggested. The latest French philologists have decided that it comes from Natalis; that is to say, 'Dies natalis,' the birthday of Christ. The word was brought into use in England at the time of the Norman Conquest, and was employed as we do the word Christmas."

Of the carols of modern days and the result of the revival of the practice and study of carol-singing much might be advanced. First of all, the name of the Rev. Thomas Helmore should be mentioned with honour as having been the pioneer of the modern revival of carol-singing. He not only brought forward many of the old carols, but also many new ones written in the old spirit, and by his labours gave a fresh impetus to carol writing and collecting. Of the value of all these things nothing further can be advanced now. It is enough to say, however, that certain of the authors have striven, and in some cases very successfully, to catch the ideal of the carol. They have not slavishly imitated the old patterns, but yet their works may stand on the same line with them, as equal in simplicity of diction and quaintness of expression. The most successful writers of this sort are the late Dr. J. M. Neale, the Rev. Archer Gurney, the Rev. H. R. Bramley, and Mr. W. Chatterton Dix.

America has also contributed something to swell the list of modern carols. One of the best known for the Feast of the Epiphany, "We three kings," was first printed anonymously in England in 1862, in a periodical called the *Penny Post*, and an interesting controversy has been instituted concerning its antiquity. The author was the Rev. John Henry Hopkins, D.D., an American divine. There are some very ancient carols concerning the three kings. In the MS. in the British Museum before referred to, there are not only two, but there is also the legend of the three kings, or wise men, from which we learn that "the first was called Melchior, King of Nubia and Arabia, who offered the Saviour gold, and who is described as the least of stature and state; Baltazar, King of Godoly and of Saba, who offered incense, and was also mean of stature; and Jaspas who was King of Taars (or Tharsis) and of the Isle of Egripwille, who offered myrrh, and was most in person, and was a black Ethiop." Thus was fulfilled the Psalmist's prophecy: "The Kings of Tharsis and of the Isles shall bring presents; the Kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts." They were afterwards baptised by St. Thomas the Apostle, and long after their deaths, their bodies were conveyed by the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, to Constantinople, whence they were removed to Milan, and ultimately by Renatus or Reinold, Archbishop of Cologne, to the latter city, where they remain, and whence they have acquired the title of the Three Kings of Cologne.

There are many other carols of a legendary character which possess some interest, belonging both to Christmas and to other seasons. The subjects of a great many, such as "The Cherry-tree Carol," "The Seven Joys," "The Child Christ at Play," together with their references and allusions, have been taken from the apocryphal books of the New Testament. From the same source the subjects of

many of the most beautiful paintings, prints, and woodcuts of the old German and Italian masters, as well as the pictures in illuminated missals, have been taken. The legends concerning the birth of the Virgin, her marriage with Joseph on the budding of the rod, details of the time onwards from the nativity of Jesus, the stories of His infancy, His labouring at His trade as a carpenter, all find their origin in these books. Many of the religious pageants, the moralities and monkish mysteries performed as dramas at Chester, Coventry, and other parts of England, are almost word for word with the stories of the apocryphal New Testament, to which work the student may be referred as likely to reward his curiosity, if not to satisfy his desire for knowledge on the subject.

Many of the popular carols are written in a style of familiarity which would be scarcely tolerated now. This has led to necessary revisions of the text by modern editors. How far this is justifiable is not a matter for discussion here. It would certainly seem that those who argue for the accuracy rather than for the purity of the text, are right when they say, if the carols were considered worthy of being placed before modern readers and singers, that not only the spirit but the diction should be preserved. In days gone by, religious phraseology was part of every day speech. If the energy of our language in the present day is due to less blasphemous references than those which were common to our fathers, there is little reason for believing that the "ornaments" of our common speech are less revolting in degree. At all events, we keep them out of our poetry and carols intended for the use of the young. The practice of singing carols in church has in a great measure made it imperative that their diction should be decent, and although some which are sung in sacred places are derived from pagan or apocryphal sources, our modern sense of propriety demands that the carol should be as pure and as Christian as possible. The "tidings of comfort and joy," which their simple lines are meant to impart, are likely to be the more welcome if they are expressed in language which is proper, although it be quaint.

THE GREAT COMPOSERS

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

NO. XXIII.—FÉLICIEN DAVID (concluded from page 654).

"LE DÉSERT" was quickly performed a second time with no less success than that which attended its first representation. We have the evidence of the composer himself to this effect. Writing to a friend he said: "At last I am recompensed for my toil and my struggles. I have given my second concert at the Théâtre Italien. The success was as great, even greater than on the first occasion. The house contained the *élite* of the Parisian public, and the evening confirmed my initial good fortune. I have received ovations without being carried away by them, and I know to what they bind me. God helping, I trust that my new works will not be unworthy of me. I often think of my native place in the midst of my triumphs, for there is no happiness for me apart from that of my good relatives and friends."

At our composer's feast of joy—none but those who have struggled long and at last conquered can tell what a feast it was—the inevitable death's head had a place. As we pointed out last month, David's concert left him in debt—a millionaire in applause, but a pauper in pocket. He owed, indeed, as much as 1,200 francs after paying out every sou of receipts. Naturally, he looked to the sale of "Le Désert" as a means of making up what was to him a formidable sum. But the publishers were not eager. Whether, as has been said, the novelty of the work made them

shy of it, or whether they thought that its success would end with the proverbial nine days, it is bootless to enquire. We have the fact that they held aloof, till at last one of them, bolder than the rest, offered the composer precisely the amount required to discharge his obligations. David took the money thankfully, and at once; but soon found that he had parted as well with the right of performance as of publication. This state of things, it appears, was not recognised till it had been fought over in a court of law, which sustained the publisher's contention and diverted to his pocket a stream of gold that the composer had fondly hoped would flow into his own. David, however, was no longer in distress. "Nothing succeeds like success," and the favour shown to "Le Désert" secured to him good prices for compositions that had long lain in his desk because nobody would look at them.

Some idea of the impression suddenly made by "Le Désert" can be gathered from a notice of the work which appeared in the *Gazette Musicale*: "Make room, gentlemen, make room I say! Open your ranks, step aside! A great composer is born to us, a man of singular power, of extraordinary character and rare talent, who all at once fascinates an entire audience, who moves and masters them imperiously, who draws from them cries of enthusiasm, and gains an astonishing popularity in less than two hours. This is not blindness on our part, or prejudice, or hyperbole. It is the simple story of success the most spontaneous, the most astonishing, at which we have ever assisted. Our ears ring yet with the impetuous explosion of applause. It was a strange, irresistible, unanimous enthusiasm. It was also the frank and loyal expression of true and deep feeling." But David was soon to find that all the world did not agree with Parisian opinion. In 1845, having given concerts in the south of France, he travelled to Germany, and, with his "Désert" challenged the criticism of a public not likely to be prejudiced in favour of anything French. In Frankfurt he met Mendelssohn, who received him with characteristic kindness, and astonished David by playing his quintets, at first sight, upon the pianoforte, doing so "without missing a note, a *nuance*, or an intention." But all Mendelssohn's countrymen were not equally polite to the visitor from over the Rhine. Some of them, who wrote in newspapers, fell foul of "Le Désert," reproaching its author for producing his effect by means of Arab melodies and melodramatic recitative rather than by musical ideas. Moreover, they contended that the simple form of the work, which had made such a lively impression upon the French, was the result of a feeble conception. Even Moscheles complained that the subject was treated "in a Frenchified way," as if, forsooth, a French composer could reasonably be expected to adopt any other. Fétis justly remarks: "David's work should, without prejudice, be judged from the point of view at which the composer placed himself—that is to say, as a musical picture. The *genre* should be the object of criticism, because art, in its immensity, repulses the co-operation of a programme, the inevitable effect of which is to limit its domain. But, taken as an exception and considered for itself alone, the "Désert" has incontestable qualities of local colour and originality. German pedantry never sufficiently takes the last-named merit into account."

During his tour, David gave concerts at Potsdam, where "Le Désert" was performed before the Court; at Baden, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Munich, Pesh, and Vienna, no less than four taking place in the Imperial city. The composer's time, however, was not wholly given to this sort of work. Like his countryman, Berlioz, under similar circumstances, he composed