

**THE OLD ENGLISH EDITION.
NO. 91. NINE MADRIGALS
TO FIVE VOICES: FROM
MUSICA TRANSALPINA, 1588**

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The Old English Edition. No RI. Nine Madrigals to Five Voices: From Musica Transalpina, 1588
by Alfonso Ferrabosco

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NINE MADRIGALS TO FIVE VOICES,

FROM

MUSICA TRANSALPINA, 1588.

BY

ALFONSO FERRABOSCO.

EDITED BY

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Preface.

THE object of this Edition is to present in an accessible form various works by English composers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain.

It is intended to reprint a selection from the music hidden away in public and private libraries, which is almost unknown, except to antiquaries and collectors of rare books.

Each volume will be accompanied by Introductions, Biographical Notices, and references to the authorities whence information is obtained.

Introduction

To No. xi. Old English Edition.

ALFONSO FERRABOSCO was most probably a native of Bologna. Robert Dowland, in his "Variety of Lute Lessons," 1610^a, calls him "the most Artificiall and famous Alfonso Ferrabosco of Bologna:" and there was a Domenico Maria Ferrabosco, who was Maestro di Cappella of the Church of S. Petronio in that city in the 16th century, who may well have been a member of the same family.

Ferrabosco's first publications were Madrigals and Motets contributed to Cipriano di Rore's collection, printed at Venice in 1544.

Some time before 1567 he settled in England, perhaps at Greenwich, where the court was often held, and where his son Alfonso was born^b. Master Alfonso, as he was called in England, seems to have met with a friendly welcome, and a pension was conferred on him by Elizabeth. In a letter to Cecil, dated Sept. 10, 1567, he mentions that he understands that the patent is being made out for his life; and begs that the words "de hereditibus et successoribus nostris" may be inserted. (Cal. of State Papers, Dom. Ser. Eliz., vol. xliv. No. 4.) This request suggests that his son was born as early as 1567.

It is not known when Ferrabosco returned to Italy, but he was in the employment of the Duke of Savoy in 1587, when he published a volume described as his second^c set of Madrigals at Venice.

^a I have no doubt that the two compositions, printed by Robert Dowland, are by the eldest Alfonso Ferrabosco, and not by the second of the name, who was born in England, and was regarded by his contemporaries as an English composer. (Peacham, *Compleat Gentleman*, 1622.)

^b "He (Dr. Wilson) did often use to say for the honour of his country of *Kent*, that *Alfonso Farabosco* was born of *Italian* parents at *Greenwich*." Wood, *Fasti Oxon*, "John Wilson," anno 1644.

^c The first set is supposed to be Cipriano di Rore's Collection, 1544, mentioned above.

The admission of works by an Italian composer into what professes to be an Old English Edition may need a word of explanation.

Alfonso Ferrabosco was the first composer of European reputation who came to live in England, and there can be no doubt that his presence had a very great influence on the English School of music, which was just then in process of development. This has not been sufficiently recognised; and for this reason specimens of his work are now presented, that they may be compared with the productions of Byrd, Kirbye, and their successors.

It is not surprising that Byrd should have been influenced by the older Italian composer, with whom he was brought into personal contact. Morley, in his "Introduction to Practical Music," tells us of "the vertuous contention in loue betwixt themselves made vpon the plaine song *Miserere*; but a contention, as I faide, in loue: which caused them to strue euery one to furmount another, without malice, enuie, or back-biting; but by great labour, studie, and paines, each making other Cenfor of that which they had done. Which contention of theirs (specially without enuie) caused them both to become excellent in that kinde, and winne such a name, and gaine such credit, as will neuer perish so long as Mufick endureth."

Each of the composers set the plainsong "Miserere" in forty different ways, which were printed by Thomas East in 1603, under the name of "Medulla Musicke." No copy of this work, however, is now known to exist.

Peacham, in his "Compleat Gentleman," first published in 1622, gives an account of another contention.

"*Alphonso Ferrabosco* the father, while he liued, for iudgment and depth of skill (as also his sonne yet liuing), was inferior vnto none: what he did was most elaborate and profound, and pleasing enough in Aire, though Maister *Thomas Morley* cenfureth him otherwise. That of his, *I saw my Ladie weeping*, and the *Nightingale* (vpon which Dittie Maister *Bird* and he in a friendly aemulation exercised their inuention) cannot be bettered for sweetnesse of Aire, or depth of iudgement."

It has been suggested, however, that this "friendly aemulation" is 'probably another version of the story told by Morley as to the plainsong "Miserere." The writer has been misled by the fact that Byrd also set the words, "The Nightingale so pleasant and so gay."' (Mr. J. A. Fuller-Maitland in the "Dictionary of National Biography.") This suggestion is the more probable as Byrd's composition is written in three parts, and Ferrabosco's in

five; Orlando di Lasso also set the same words. Another "ditty," which was also set by the same three composers, is "Susanna fair" (Susann' un jour).

Alfonso Ferrabosco the son was also esteemed as a composer, especially as a writer for instruments. Antony Wood calls him "the most famous man in all y^e world for Fantazias of 5 and 6 parts" [MS. Notes on Musicians]. He published a volume of Lessons for viols in 1609, and in the same year a volume of "Ayres;" he also contributed three Motets to Leighton's "Tears and Lamentacions," 1614. He held various appointments as musician at Court, and died in 1628, leaving two sons, Henry and Alfonso (the third of the name who died in 1661), also musicians. There was moreover a John Ferrabosco, organist of Ely Cathedral from 1662 to 1682, who may have been son to one of them.

[The references used in this account of Ferrabosco are taken for the most part from the articles already referred to in the "Dictionary of National Biography."]

Many of Ferrabosco's Madrigals found their way into English Collections. "Musica Transalpina," 1588, contains fourteen by him, now reprinted, it is believed, for the first time. The Second Part of "Musica Transalpina," 1597, contains six Madrigals, and Morley's collection, 1598, five more.

There are besides in MS. collections many works bearing his name, but without scoring them, it is impossible to say which belong to the father and which to the son, so that no catalogue of his works has been attempted.

"Musica Transalpina," from which these madrigals are taken, was published in 1588. It is a collection of forty-seven madrigals by the best Italian and Flemish writers, and is especially interesting as being one of the two first books of madrigals printed in England; Byrd's book of "Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs," having appeared earlier in the same year. The "Epistle Dedicatorie," which tells us all that we know about the book, is printed below.

It has been thought advisable to alter the words in a few places, to make them more suitable for modern singers. As the original verses have very little literary merit, the Editor has felt no scruple in doing so.