

FIFTY YEARS OF CHURCH MUSIC

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Fifty years of church music by W. E. Dickson

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W. E. DICKSON

**FIFTY YEARS OF
CHURCH MUSIC**



INTERIOR OF ELY CATHEDRAL IN 1843.

FROM A DRAWING BY HARRADEN.

FIFTY YEARS

OF

Church Music,

BY

W. E. DICKSON, M.A.

FLOREAT ECCLESIA ELIENSIS.

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FIFTY YEARS OF CHURCH MUSIC.

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PRELIMINARY.

"When the Regent was here, he declar'd in a hurry

"That Richmond in Yorkshire beat Richmond in Surrey."

Local Guide-book.

I take no sort of pride in the fact that I was born in the reign of King George the Fourth, for most certainly the period covered by that reign, namely 1820-1830, was not one of those which shine with brilliancy in the annals of England.

This humble chronicle has nothing to do with the causes, political or other, which contributed to bring about a low condition of the national life and character. Of the personal faults of the Sovereign, others have written plainly enough. The great novelist, in his "Four Georges," has not spared the First Gentleman of Europe. Yet there were plenty of good men and true whose loyalty blinded their eyes to these errors; and I recall now the portly form of one of them, a Rector, a Justice of the Peace, as he rises at the foot of his table, his wine-glass lifted above his head, with the sonorous toast, "The King! God bless him!"

Most properly is this stalwart champion of Royalty introduced in this my prefatory page, for he was the chief actor in the earliest event of my infancy, namely, my christening, which took place on the fifteenth of July, 1823, in the old grey parish-church of Richmond, that fairest of Yorkshire towns, crowned by its castle, and laved by the waters of Swale.



CHAPTER I.

1823—1833.

"All which details I have no doubt JONES, who reads this book at his club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental."—THACKERAY—*Fanny Fair*.

In all that concerns the realm of Art, the decade ending with 1830 was barren and dreary, and in the department of Church-Music especially, the branch of Art with which I associate these Reminiscences, a very low standard of production and performance was attained even in cathedrals and collegiate churches possessing endowments for trained musicians, clerical and lay. Our church-music at Richmond was probably not ruder and more unlovely than that which might have been heard at any other church with similar claims to importance throughout the North Riding. An organ had been erected by subscription in 1809, and was amusingly described in the local guide-book as consisting of "three towers and two flats, with a Swell of the most pleasing effect." It may have been about the year 1828 that I had the pleasure of being introduced to this castellated instrument on the occasion of a visit to it by my mother and sister. They were both sound players of the pianoforte, but had no acquaintance with the organ; their notion, dear souls, was that great rolling chords in the bass were the chief characteristic of the proper treatment of the instrument, and my astonish-