

# *A Lively Hope*

*A sonnet sequence on the childhood, Eton College years, and music of  
Sir Hubert Parry*

## *Inklings*

“We hear of his composing chants and hymn-tunes when he was about eight”. *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1928), 55

Some chants and melodies for hymns at eight  
Gave childhood hints, yet first among the strong  
To forge him served in Winchester, that great





Composer, Wesley. Such a source for song



*Samuel Sebastian Wesley*

Could hardly be surpassed. Since “Blessed Be  
The God and Father” was ancestral to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VHitHzX1Ww>

The later hymns and anthems in the key  
Of beauty, Parry’s compositions grew  
Towards the holiness of English church  
Perfection in its highest strains. The hymn  
‘Jerusalem’ was natural. Do not search  
Too far to find the tree trunk of this limb.  
An ancient church’s organ loft is where  
Young Parry’s gift grew like an early prayer.

## ***Holy Innocence***

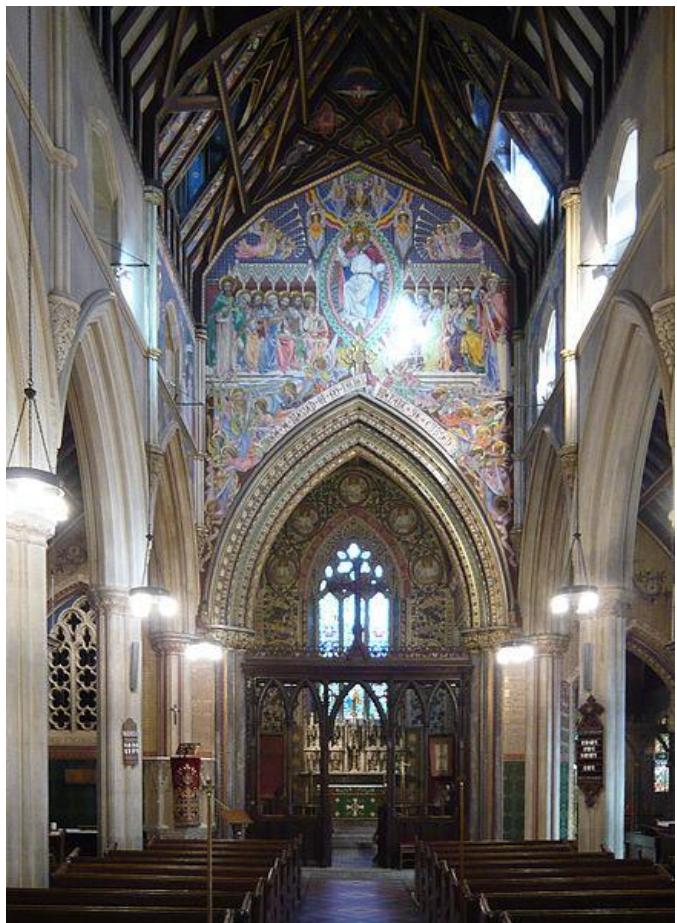
We wonder if the organist who spelled  
Out basic counterpoint and how to write

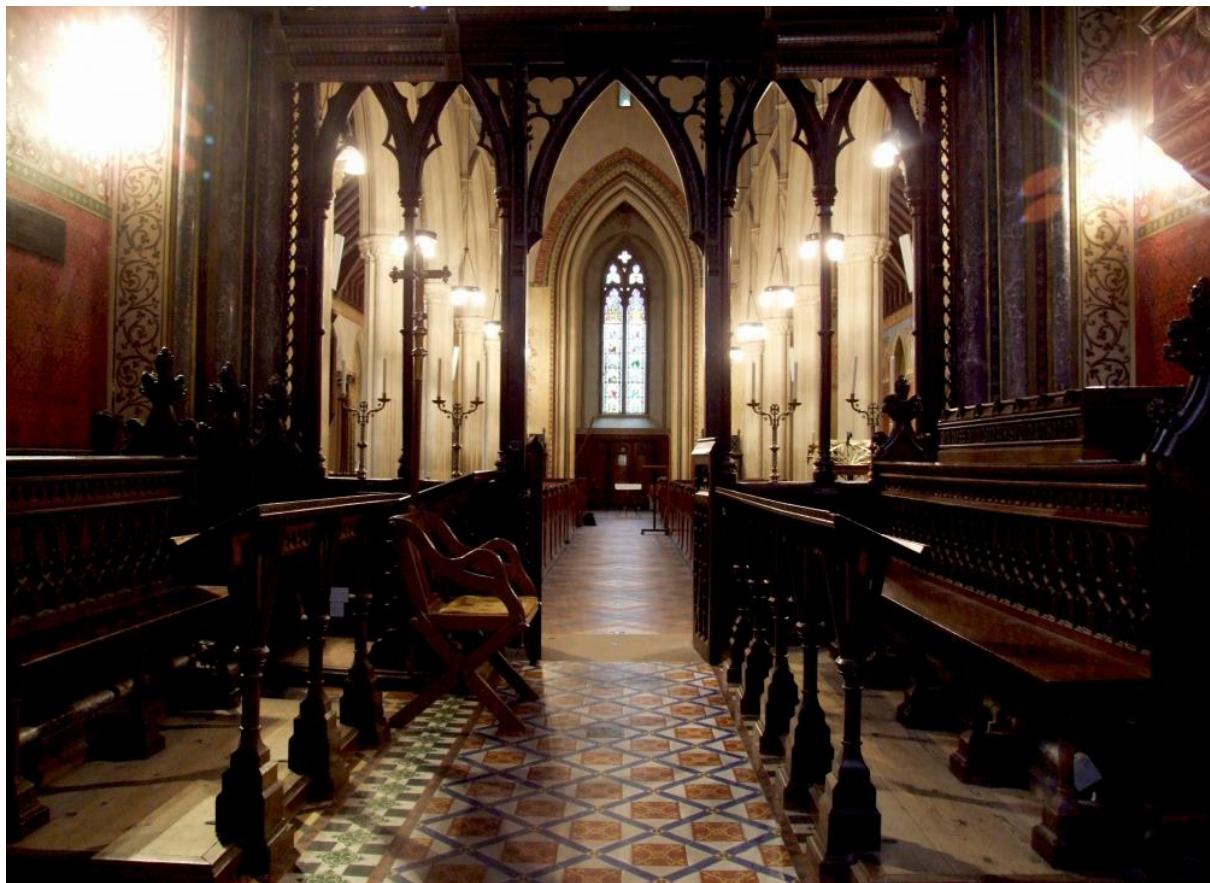
Down harmony knew that this later swelled  
To eight-part glory in a music bright  
As heaven's capital with streets of gold  
And gem foundations. Highnam's Edward Brind  
Could not have known the wonders to unfold  
Like Whitsun's many tongued and fiery wind  
In future compositions. Highnam's church



*The Holy Innocents Church, Highnam, Gloucestershire*

Provided guidance after Wesley's start  
With Hubert. There the boy began his search  
For hands on holographs to stir the heart.  
He heard the growths of practical desire





Come echoing from Highnam's carved wood choir.

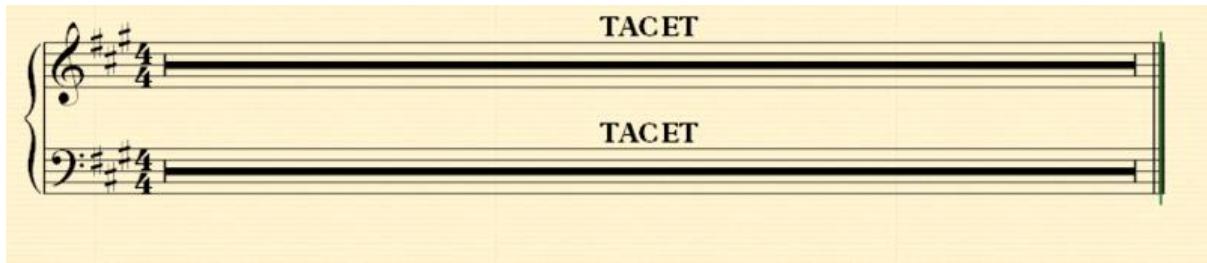
## *Early Sprinkling by Samuel Sebastian Wesley*

From Twyford deeper waters start to flow.  
At least that is the place where Wesley poured  
The priming of the well. The master's glow  
Went down into the learner's core. The chord  
Struck then could not be banished by the will  
Of father for his son to grow to be  
In business. No, that most unworthy chill  
Would be replaced by music's warmer plea.  
The baritone at Eton made his name  
As pianist and writer set for song,  
The songs of many facets yielding fame.  
The soul of compositions was too strong:  
Sonatas, fugues and symphonies gushed through  
Him, old but new, creations, chord-like, true.

# *The Music Historian*

“Johann Sebastian Bach: the Story of the Development of a Great Personality (1909), [was] rated by *The Times* as his most important book” ~ Wikipedia

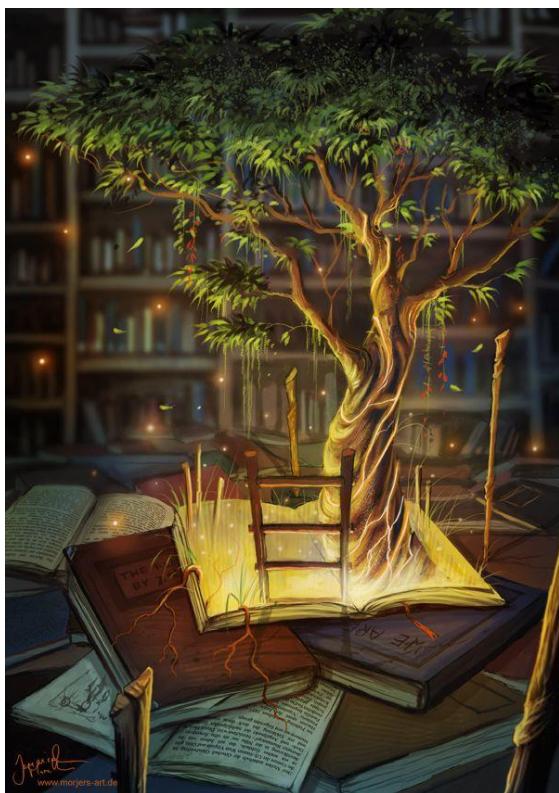
Nobility and grandeur at the height  
Of music, that is what the boy was taught  
By Wesley. Hubert learned the stately might  
Of Bach from Wesley, what that great one wrought  
In mathematical perfection set  
In gravest notes, a beauty cool in shape  
And warm in tone, a numinous duet.  
Perhaps it was like parting of the drape  
There in the Holy of the Holies, in  
Between it and the holy prelude. This  
Wide-winged epiphany would underpin  
The later man as geometric bliss.  
From early on he knew the very best.  
The grail did not require a life-long quest.



When death devours a young one's sister, grief  
Lasts long. Laments continue on for years.  
“In my distress,” an anthem brought relief,  
Perhaps. The Eton boy used notes for tears  
And even later in the pages of  
His diary he dragged up words of pain  
Ongoing, four years past. The closest love  
He knew in childhood was in Lucy's reign  
Of sisterhood. His brother often gone  
Away at school, his father's trips prolonged,  
The step-mother devoted to her spawn,  
The motherless young boy felt wronged and wronged.  
An anthem and a diary entry are  
The hints we have of Lucy's tacet scar.

## *At the Solitary Age of Twelve— Seven and Twelve Being Holy Numbers*

The first of seven early music books  
Reveals a boy methodical as Bach.  
He studies Bach's first 48. He looks  
In detail, analyzing. "Let us talk,"  
He seems to say, "Just you and I alone.  
You give me notes and I make careful notes  
In my replies," establishing a tone  
Of life-long worship and respect. No throats  
Are needed in this conversation. Still,  
The pages take the reverent boy's replies.  
He works throughout the book of beauties till



The Librarian's Retreat by jerry8448.deviantart.com on @DeviantArt

He fills it with his thoughts. His careful eyes  
Take in the teaching, fingers taking down  
The lessons. Hubert leans, a smiling frown.

## *Harmony in Horticulture*

So chants and hymn tunes seem to be his first  
Attempts and one, an LM tune, was for  
The Church of England hymnal. This young burst  
Of writing, this foundation made the soar  
To heights his possibility. From these,  
These simple seeds, his English garden grew.  
His early training acted like decrees  
For older forms to be created, new.  
An opera, the symphonies, the songs,  
Sonatas and the choral pieces surged  
Up from these early plantings like the prongs



Of lupins, hollyhocks, and foxgloves. Urged  
By childhood skills, his mastery moved on



To formal plots arranged by his baton.

## ***Revising Early Compositions at the Age of Seventeen, Eton***

In 1865 at seventeen  
The Eton schoolboy cast his eyes back through  
His early compositions. With their sheen  
Of amateurishness he held the view  
That they should be revised or put away.  
Imagine being so advanced in taste  
At such an age that wisdom held the sway.  
He copied some. He judged that some were waste.  
Revising many, he included date  
Of copying and changes. This reveals  
A few were lacking. One he wrote at eight  
Is counted as his first. How glad he feels  
Is noted: one he wrote at 10 was “Used.”  
Forgive the lad for feeling still enthused.

## ***Forced Freedom***

*Emily Daymond surveys the Eton schoolboy's self-assessment of his music while a teenager reacting partly to his composition teacher giving him only fugue and canon assignments.*

At Eton Hubert's music was addressed  
By him in daily entries in his log,  
One scholar notes. Young eye and mind assessed  
Them: fugues and canons then became a slog.  
Perhaps this was because he found one far  
“Too hard” or maybe it was just because  
The focus was too tight. No door ajar  
Allowed some other forms without the laws  
Of contrapuntal lines. He tried his hand  
In “free orchestral” overture-like style  
For one. He “scribbled away” in command  
Of this one fugue attempting to beguile  
The strictness. Grabbing canons by the beard,  
He grew and triumphed. Hubert persevered.

## ***Intellectualized Emotion***

*The young Parry put into his jottings that his favourite among them all was “my grand fugue in G major with three (own) subjects.”*

“A man’s reach should exceed his grasp.” ~ Robert Browning

He kept on writing at the tough one though,  
Quite like an ancient hero given task,  
Task, task, and harder task. Thus muscles grow.  
You do what music and your teachers ask  
And do it even harder, do it more.  
You take the thing and make it fuller, large,  
More intricate, complete. You stretch a score.  
You write a denser piece and make it charge  
With extra power. He wrote a fugue of grand  
Complexity of not just one, or two,  
But triple subjects all his own. His hand  
Grasped far beyond the teacher’s aims, too few.  
His century thought the major key of G



Ode to Joy

*J=80*

2/2

5

9

13

Was for emotions of a staid degree.

## *Greatness Rises*

On February 22 the grand  
 Fugue rose from all the instrument the first  
 Time. Strength, complexity and subjects fanned  
 Out through the air. The young man's music burst  
 Out from mere theory and ink when played  
 By Dr Elvey. Augmentation stretched  
 The melodies. It was as if it stayed  
 Them, slightly, and excited stretti etched  
 The composition near its busy end.  
 The borrowings and calmness were required  
 To balance out excitement, calm the friend  
 Of vibrancy, a symmetry inspired.  
 The pedals and the manuals combine.  
 His teacher brings out beauty from each line.

# *A Canon “Written in School” —in a Geometry Lesson?*

His later comment on his childhood work  
 Remarks on one of these, a canon, that  
 It was “Written in School.” Did he shirk  
 His classroom duties, hiding where he sat  
 Behind the others doing problems from  
 A lesson book? The master would not guess  
 The boy was hoping that the notes would come  
 In harmonies like winning in a chess  
 Match. Canons flowed as sensuous as swirls  
 Of dragons: one, this one, was perfect blue  
 Of eye placed so . . . just so . . . in golden curls,  
 Curved scales. The teacher didn’t have a clue.  
 The boy who sat there at the back composed  
 Not angles — but melodies juxtaposed.

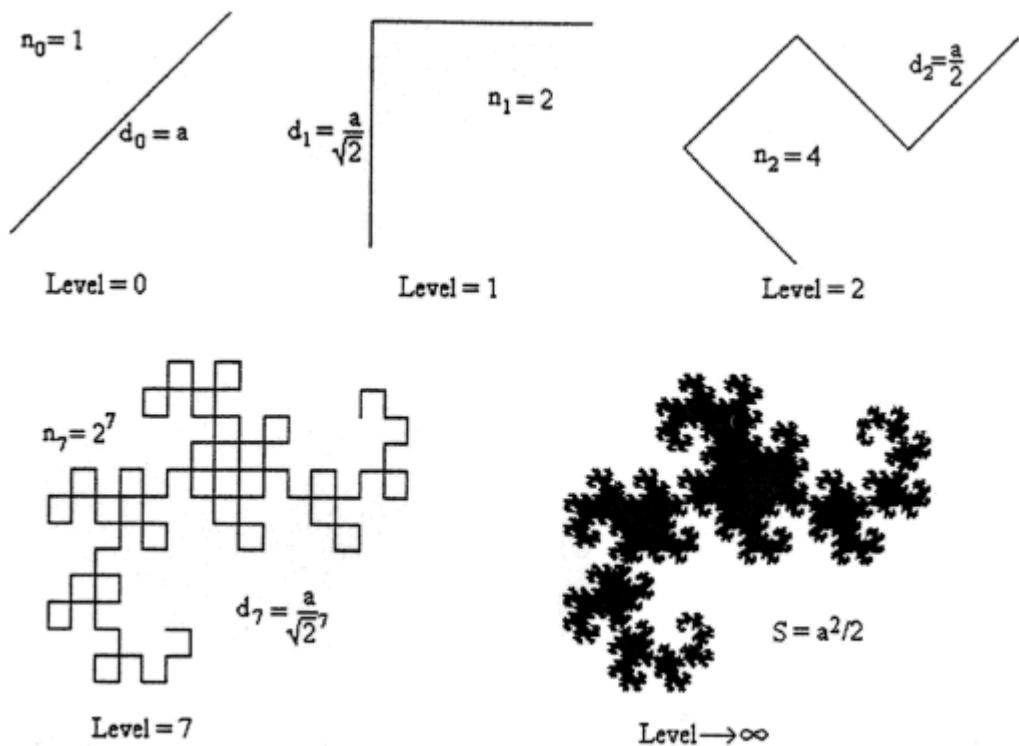


Figure 10. The generation of the dragon curve for different levels. The area at each level can be calculated by the summation of the areas of squares with a side of  $d_i = a/\sqrt{2}^i$ .

## ***“and goes on thus contentedly to the end”***

He learned to change a canon's form when need  
Required a shift. He might repeat a tune  
Two measures later underneath the seed  
He planted. Still, if that did not commune  
When he went on in combination, he  
Would then commit the blending after just  
One measure next time. Practicality  
Was wise. His attitude was cool, robust,  
And flexible. So music ought to come:  
What matters is the beauty, not the norm  
Completely. Early on aesthetics from  
His pen were freed up from right rigid form.  
So he (in canon and in later shapes)  
Through freedom found out new ways for escapes.

## ***Heart Trouble***

Where does music come from? Does it come from  
Heart wounds? No. Music is at first derived  
From minds. It offers mathematics' thrum  
For ears. At Eton teenage Parry thrived  
On music and on sport in spite of heart  
Disease becoming palpable. Right through  
His youth and adult years he felt the smart  
Of pain inside his chest, not something new:  
His mother died. His father's second wife  
Moved in. She had no time for Hubert, spent  
Her love on children of her own. His life  
Knew heart pangs early—lived its life in Lent  
Though wrapped in luxury. His mother gone,



*Highnam Court, Hubert's childhood home*

His childhood was a gray and emptied dawn.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vintzileos/468326673/>

As adolescence broke inside his form,  
New family troubles coursed throughout this phrase  
Of music in his years, a time not warm  
For brother Clinton, punished for his ways  
With women and with drugs. How Hubert coped  
When there was greater loss than this we know.  
His sister, Lucy, died. His brother doped,  
Disgraced, expelled, his sister killed by lung  
Disease, the boy recorded diary lines  
About her loss more troubled and profound  
Than deepest movements. Grief borne undermines.  
Grief does its worst. Grief struggles to astound  
Us through its injuries and scars to love.  
Somehow, like Parry, we must rise above.

## ***Psalm 130***

From out of depths of sorrow came the sounds

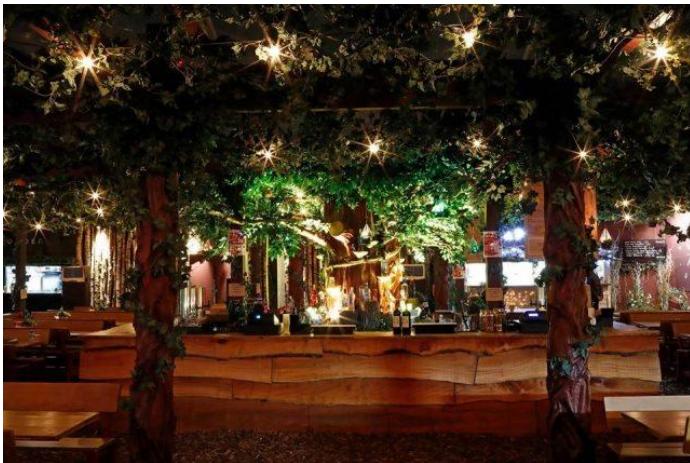
Of Parry's anthem (first of all) "In my Distress." The music came from deep chest wounds *Und* Bach and Luther. Anguish reaches sky And heaven only when the music climbs From sources such as these. What troubles us Is how the boy had suffered. Music chimes Out from his mind, his heart, and hand to truss The soul, a soul split far inside. The psalm "Aus tiefer Not" comes out of him as lines Shaped more like blood from crucifixion's palm



And sword wounds up in gold and scarlet shrines.  
Affliction makes him cry out note, and chord,  
And melody for sister he adored.

## ***The Pergola of Composition***

"There is also a setting of Horace's Ode 'Persicos odi puer apparatus,' for A.T.B.B. 'written in school [Eton College] , February 22, 1865' ". ~ Emily Daymond, 77



As strange as ancient Persia might have seemed  
To sixteen-year-old Parry (strange as odes  
In Latin), only something must have gleamed  
Out from the lines of Horace. (Verse explodes  
In minds of boys.) Perhaps he liked restraint  
While others loved extravagance and plush  
Surroundings, purity without the taint  
Of tastelessness, the classic, not the gush  
Of decoration, overstatement or  
Embroidered velvet—just harmonic lines  
Of music twined together in a score,  
And nothing of exotic sveldt designs.  
Tied grapes in green along the frame above  
A poet—they provide enough to love.

I hate Persian furnishings, boy,  
wreaths twined around the lime-trees displease.  
Cease from seeking the places where  
the late rose fades.

Add nothing to the simple myrtle,  
I beg, though you are eager: it is not unsuitable for you,  
my servant, nor me, [as I sit] beneath the tied  
vines, drinking.

Persicōs ōdī, puer, apparātūs, 1  
displacent nexae philyrā corōnae, 2  
mitte sectārī, rosa quō locōrum 3  
sēra morētur. 4

Simplicī myrtō nihil adlabōrēs 5  
sēdulus, cūrō: neque tē ministrum 6  
dēdecet myrtus neque mē sub artā 7  
vīte bibentem. 8

## ***With a Pretty Ding, Dong, Bell***

“This has a very pretty madrigalian ‘Ding, dong, bell’ ending.”  
~ Emily Daymond, 77

At 15 Hubert tried his hand at straight  
Poetic madrigal, a Shakespeare song,  
In "Tell Me, Where is Fancy Bred?" The gate  
Of fancy is our eyes and where they long  
To settle and to gaze. The strictest heart  
Of music is the madrigal, through two  
Or more carved voices. Singing in each part  
Is all controlled by soul. Each voice in cue  
With words must seek emotions of each line,  
Indeed of every term. The voice is led  
By feeling in the written phrase. Design  
Flows like a channelled stream, though, from the head.  
The mathematic mind inside the boy  
Brought forth phrased feelings through this singing toy.



## "Tell Me Where Is Fancy Bred"

(From "The Merchant of Venice")

Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head?  
How begot, how nourished?  
    Reply, reply.  
It is engender'd in the eyes,  
With gazing fed; and fancy dies  
In the cradle, where it lies.  
    Let us all ring fancy's knell;  
    I'll begin it - Ding, dong, bell.  
Ding, dong, bell.

## O Head Full of Blood and Wounds

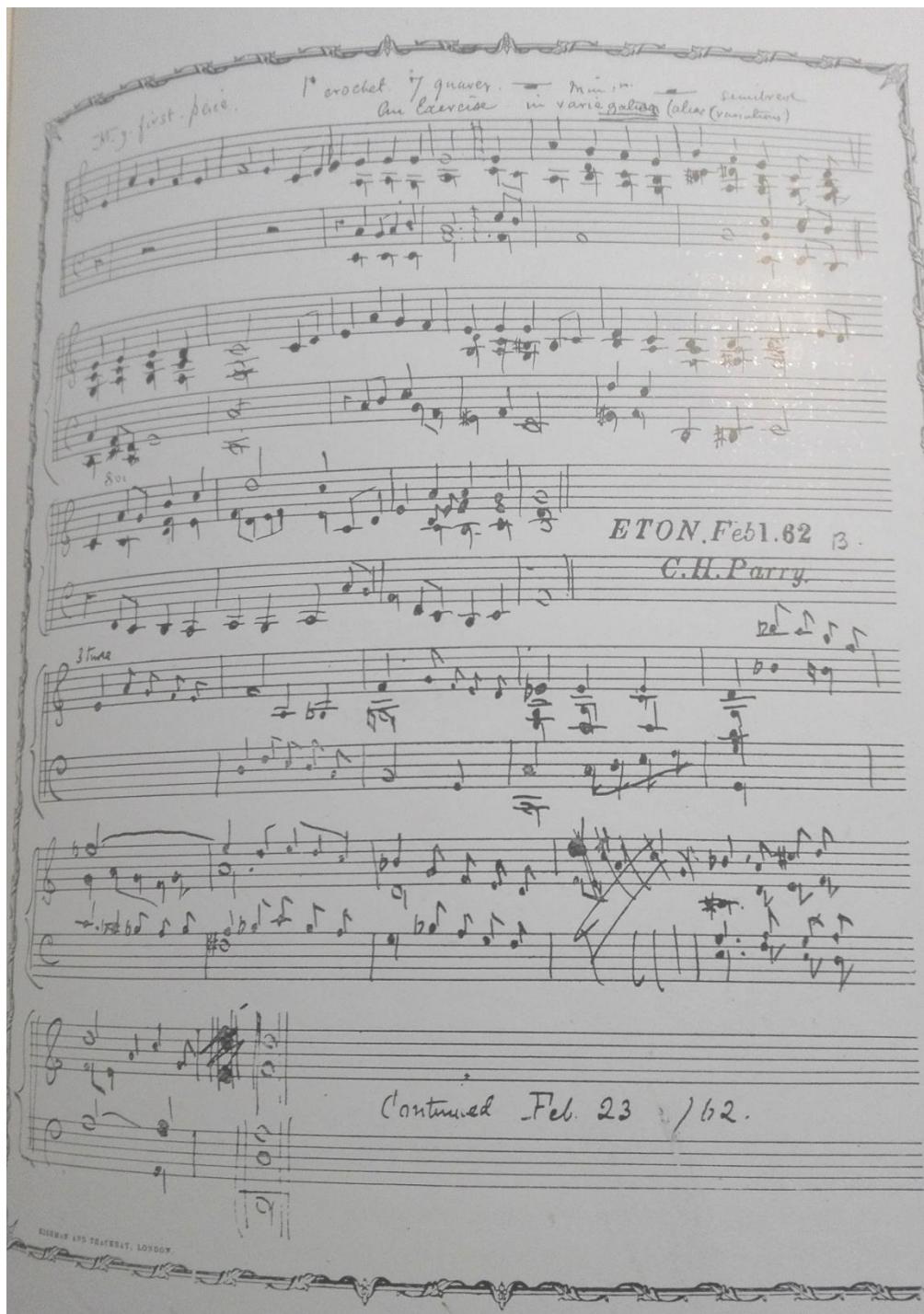
Before his fourteenth year the boy wrote down  
A melody like Bach's "*O Haupt voll Blut  
Und Wunden,*" but the sixth note did not frown.  
Instead it mounted up. It took a route  
More positive. Prophetic nearly, one  
Might say, when looking at his future heights.  
"Real beauty and much tender charm" this son  
Of Bach put in this "first peice."\* He made flights

From greatness like an eaglet fledgling raised  
Up by the grandeur of the past behind.  
An early critic found his strengths and praised  
The “harmonies and cadences,” a mind  
Beyond his age. She felt them strike inside  
Her head, not wounds, but his predictive stride.

\*sic

## ***Prime***

The first real piece by Parry, or the one  
He called his first, reveals through notes his clear  
And sweet imagination. He has won  
His way to poetry. He finds the sphere  
Of youth’s sincerity. Variations  
Reveal his talent, but the “first peice” proves  
His power. Hubert calls them “variegations.”  
He’s joking, boyish, but the music moves  
Us. Purity of vision, if not spelled  
Quite right, is dream-like nonetheless. The lines  
Flow on. The future promise is both swelled  
And focused presently in singing signs.  
Fourteen, with childlike penmanship, he still  
Breaks through. His music will break through. It will.



## *Strength through Dedication*

At Eton Parry moved to start the task  
Of bettering his pieces written there,  
An early sign which shows that he would ask  
Himself to work perfection through his care  
And dent of work, a tough composer from

The start—and strained to win at sports despite  
His threatened health. A serious taut drum  
Beat rhythms of determination, fight  
And victory. He wrote some pieces twice  
And three times, more. His muscled heart was weak  
But even so his soul was made of gneiss  
Or something harder, strong, a rock-like streak.  
A ‘Pastoral’ might come of this as sweet  
As Samon’s honeycomb, a lion’s treat.

## ***“Thoughts of... Summer half, 1865”***

A piece just eight bars long is pregnant with  
Vague meaning and with secrecy. A man  
(Not quite) is burdened with Victorian myth  
Of sex as tight as whalebone girdles can  
Impose on him. On top of that he’s just a boy  
At school still, stilled by regulations, “ought  
And should,” and manly self-control. To toy  
With music, even seriously, distraught,  
He manages eight measures and no more.  
The heat of summer pulses through him. He  
Holds back the name he loves and tries to pour  
It into music. Restraint is the key.

The signature of time is everywhere  
And evermore. Eternity is there.

## ***“When Stars are in the Quiet Sky”***

‘The desire of the moth for the star’ ~ Percy Bysshe Shelley

On thirteen August, 1865,  
This song came out of Hubert Parry, whole.  
It seems he did not really need to strive.  
Perhaps his writing then was like a stroll  
Along a path in Eton’s garden space  
With quiet stars and quiet sky above  
Him as he sat composing at a pace  
More meditation than like fevered love.  
The stars are loved by moths, according to

The poet Shelley. This is quieter  
Than frantic passion. As an evening blue  
This flower is not an orange rioter  
Like marigolds. An Evensong with prayers  
This melody, it climbs up gentle stairs.

## ***Edmund Spenser's Complicated Sonnet Causes a Simple Composition***

‘Songs are not neglected. There are two; one, “When stars are in the quiet skies” (written August 13, 1865, and another, “Fair is my love,” (“written for Primrose, Eton, ’64-5 copied *ad fin.*, July 3, ’65”).) ~ Emily Daymond

While “Fair is my love” is just a budding boy’s  
Attempt to write a song, it works but more  
As just an exercise, some fun that toys  
With simpler tasks not really cut out for  
A challenge. Melodies combined in twos  
And threes were more fulfilling. Subjects in  
A fugue he grew together, vines to fuse  
As on a trellis, these were much less thin.  
A primrose is a sweet thing, but not sweet  
As clematis and climbing rose combined  
As they rise up on sturdy frames. They meet  
And part and flow, are not so much confined  
As one small tune set down on music’s bars.  
He knew that music grows its blooms towards stars.

## ***First Magnificat, 1864***

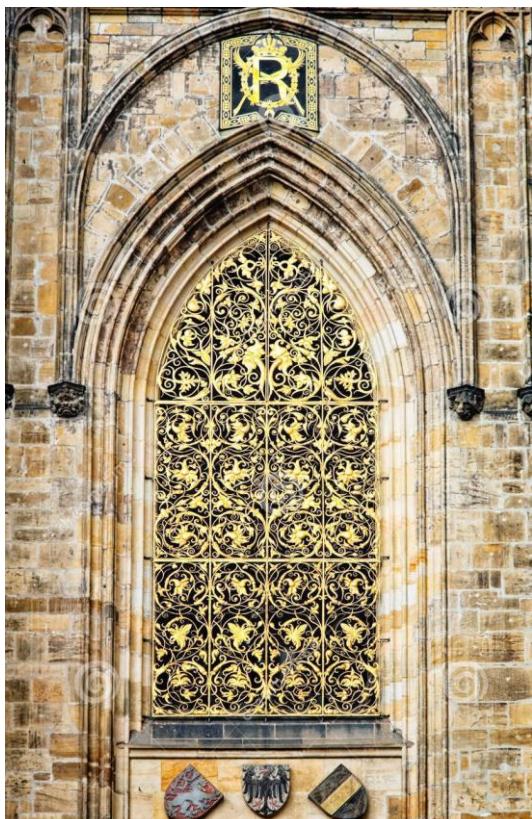
His first Magnificat is likely to  
Have been the one he heard performed while  
He was still at Eton as a boy. True  
To truth he hated it—thought it was vile—  
When he looked back on it. He called it bad.  
He called it “bad.” In 1865  
He looked at it again and felt he had  
To call it “very bad.” He didn’t skive  
From treating it severely. This firm youth  
Scorned failure. He refused to be too mild

In his self-censorship. He told the truth.  
He was not pathetic. No. He reviled  
His young lacklustre piece. Composing two  
Or three mature ones more, he won right through.

## *A Common Prayer for Honesty*

‘an anthem in five parts, “Why boastest thou thyself,” the second section adding a solo quartet, making a good nine-part work (1865).’ ~ Emily Daymond

This criticism of himself becomes  
The context of his later anthem, “Why  
Boastest Thou Thyself?” Integrity drums  
Away attacks. Candor in short supply  
Would not have served him well. Large self regard  
Instead could be a tyrant. Mischief would  
Result in lower quality. A hard  
Self condemnation he well understood  
Was goodness if his music would endure.  
A daily modesty said, “Do not bask  
In praising of your ego.” Truths ensure  
Your triumphs. Firmed up frankness is your task.  
Besides, mere tunes were not your only skill.  
Your strength was more like weavings of a grille.



## *Parts Song*

### **“Take, oh Take Those Lips Away”**

“(sung at the Eton College Concert)” ~ Emily Daymond

Take, oh take those lips away,  
That so sweetly were forsworn,  
And those eyes: the breake of day,  
    Lights that do mislead the Morn;  
But my kisses bring again, bring again,  
Seals of love, but sealed in vain, sealed in vain.

Perhaps the innocent and young should not  
Attempt the parts of tortured, sex-stretched love.  
The earliest of young male passion, hot  
Though it may be, is still too soft like dove  
Breasts, still to pale like “breake of day.” The dawn  
Of teen obsession can be strong as floods  
Or full Niagra Falls. It lacks the brawn  
Of hard erections in demand of thuds,  
(Thud, THUD). It’s true, though, that a young man’s “Morn”  
Of pulsing hormones understands too well  
The possible rejection and how torn  
A heart can be. It knows the gate to hell.  
The young don’t know the Preacher says, “All’s vain,  
All’s vain.” They do not know love’s deepest pain.

### **A Sonata in F Minor for Pianoforte Duet**

“written while laid up in a damage with football, in ten days” ~ the teenage Hubert Parry

The schoolboy sport-team member with that heart  
Condition just refused to let his weak  
Young ticker hold him back. He struggled. In Hubert’s chart  
Contending was the point. He wasn’t meek  
In anything. A proof of this was what  
He did when he was crippled in a game  
And forced to spend ten days in sheets: a spot  
Of serious composing. He would tame  
His injury as something he could turn

To good account. He passed his days in bed  
Creating music, managing to churn  
Out more than just creations in his head,  
A piece for four hands on piano black



And white. He simply would not let himself go slack.

## ***Poems Enshrined in His Affections***

‘showing that even from such early days these poems had been enshrined in his affections’  
~ Emily Daymond

The years have helped us to forget that there  
Were times when boys did not have e-games, vids,  
And Google, never mind that old-time pair  
Of radio and television. Kids  
Relied on football, sometimes even verse  
For happiness. ‘The Glories of Our Blood  
And State’ sent chills through them as strong as curse  
Or love. These boys did not require the crud  
Of porno films to make them into men.  
They read their Milton and their Shakespeare where  
Now they’d read their Harry Potter. Back then  
They might sit down at night and write “Blest Pair

Of Sirens,’ or a part song, or a fugue.  
They’d do this even though they had no Moog.

## *As a Boy He Even Had the Start of His Phrase for the Male Quartet in ‘Blest Pair of Virgins’*

The younger music sometimes opened to  
A later depth three decades later, or  
Perhaps a few years on. One movement grew  
In seriousness to be presented for  
The Gloucester Festival and be performed,  
‘Intermezzo Religioso,’ there.  
That ‘bad’ Magnificat was later warmed  
Through several incarnations, like the pair  
Of versions of his Parry in D. At  
The last — just over three decades on — it  
Advanced to his approved Magnificat.  
His failures did not mean that he would quit.  
His pencil scribblings as a boy were changed,  
But only slightly, and then greatness ranged.

## *While Still at Eton He Became the Youngest Ever to Take a Bachelor of Music at Oxford University*

His Eton life was one variety  
Upon another. Many genres came  
From him. He almost had a piety  
About his football, playing every game  
(Or nearly), ending senior keeper of  
The field. He played. He sang. He gave debate  
On topics such as Homer. Still his love  
Of music was the balancing, the weight  
That gave him guidance, and the anchor held  
For use when needed. Violins were not  
Alone. He wrote out anthem, song, and spelled

Out fugue. Such scores became his central plot.  
Despite his threatened heart, he went all in.  
The music and the boy were set to win.