

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.

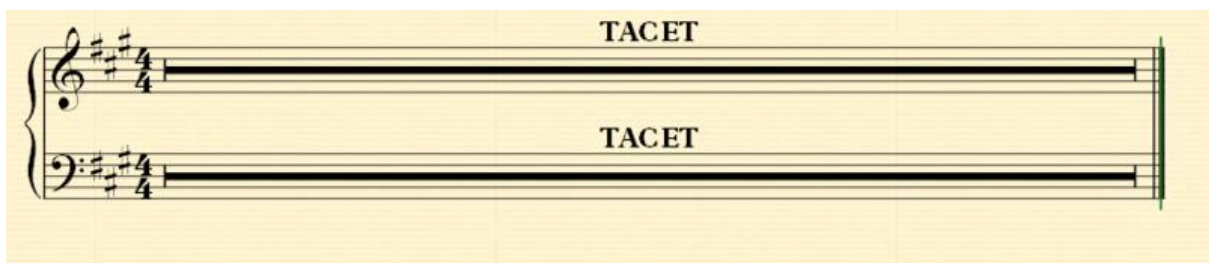
Early Sprinkling by Samuel Sebastian Wesley

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



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 strettis 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.

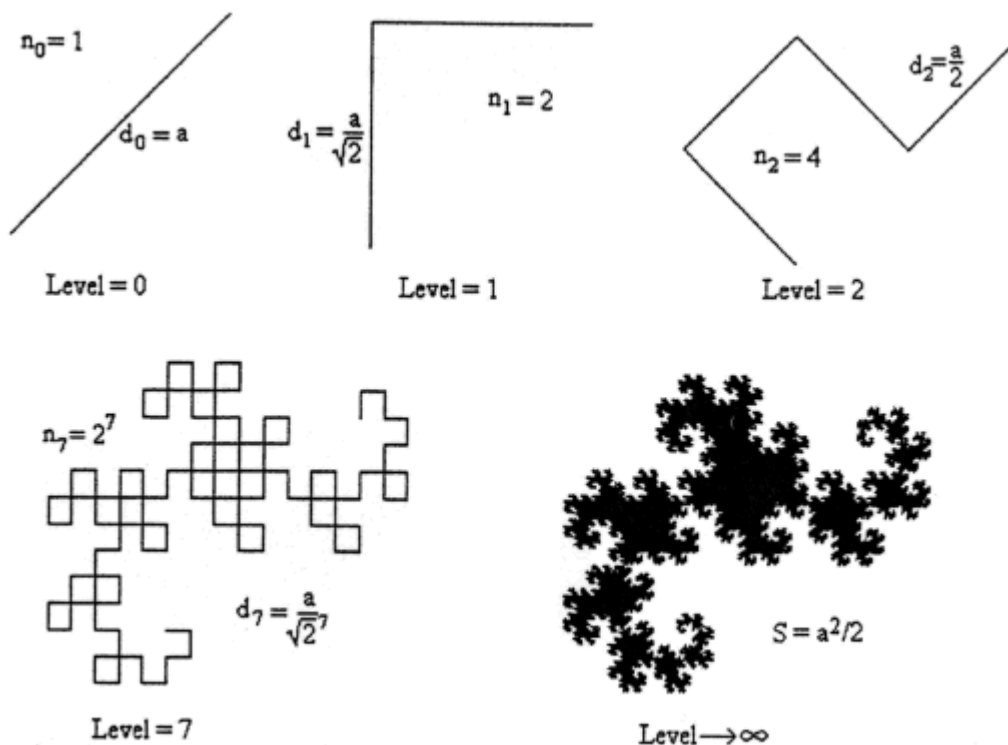


Figure 10. The generation of the dragon curve for different levels. The area at each level can be calculated by the summation of the areas of squares with a side of $d_i = a/\sqrt{2}^i$.

“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 svelt 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.

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

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.

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

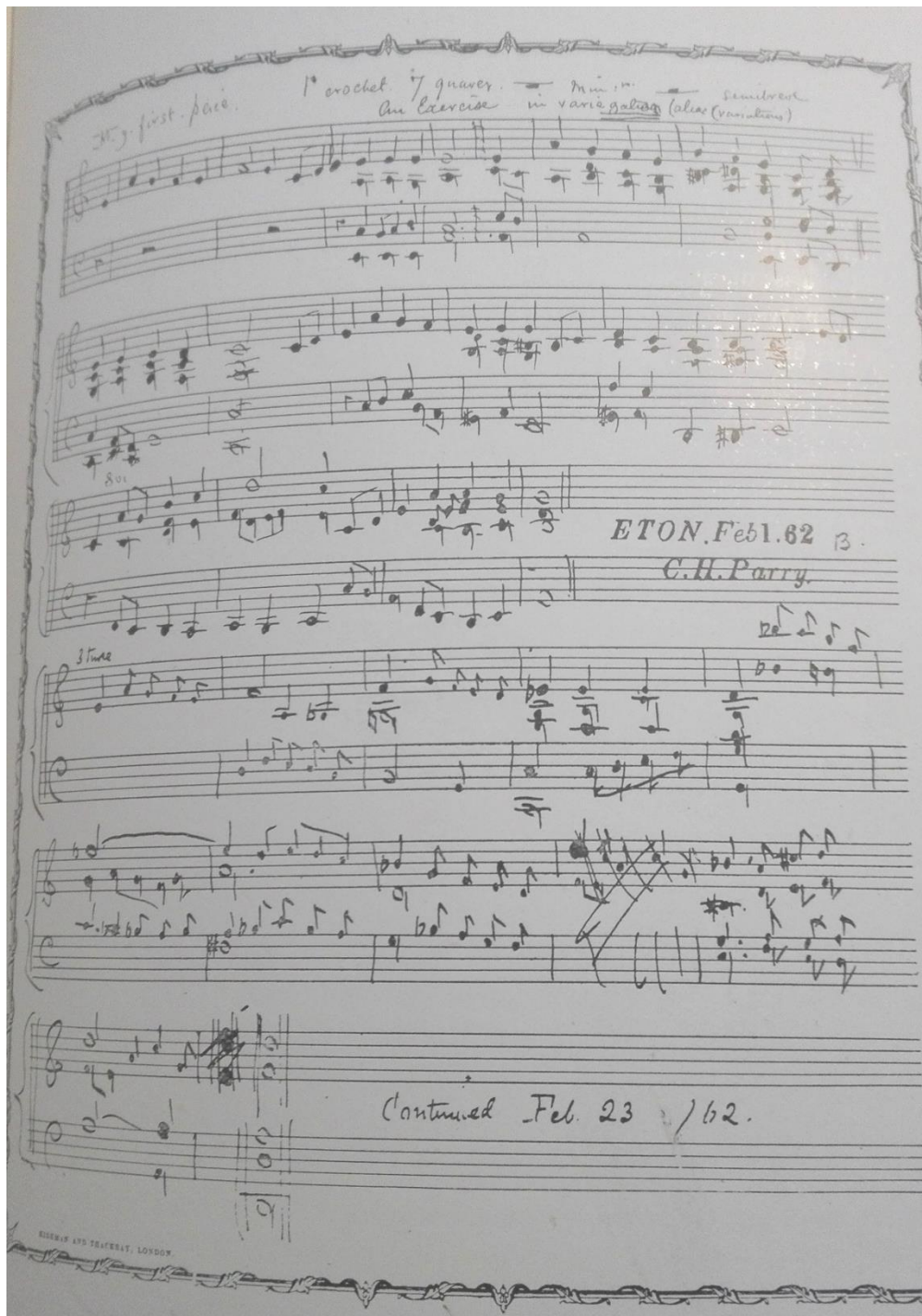
Before his fourteenth year the boy wrote down
A melody like Bach's "*O Haupt voll Blut
Und Wunden*," but the sixth note did not frown.
Instead it mounted up. It took a route
More positive. Prophetic nearly, one
Might say, when looking at his future heights.
“Real beauty and much tender charm” this son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

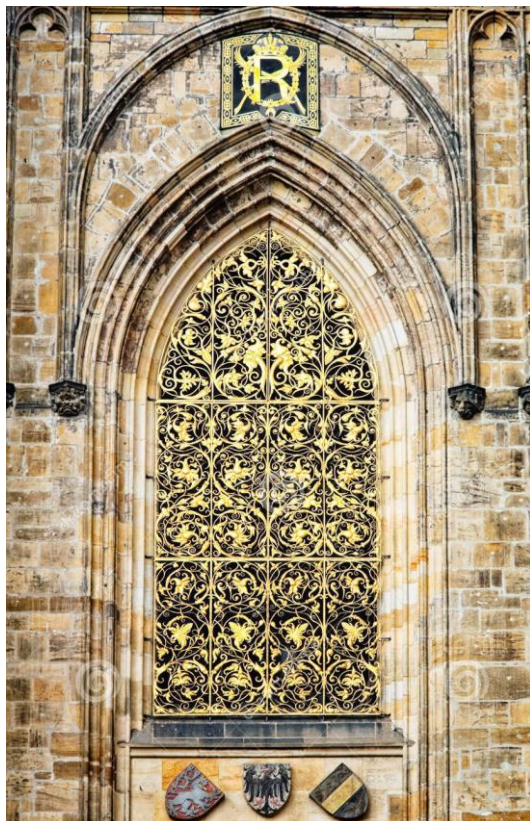
His first Magnificat is likely to
Have been the one he heard performed while
He was still at Eton as a boy. True
To truth he hated it—thought it was vile—
When he looked back on it. He called it bad.
He called it “bad.” In 1865
He looked at it again and felt he had
To call it “very bad.” He didn’t skive
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 boasteth 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
Boasteth 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 Niagara 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.