

# PRESIDED AT THE ORGAN

### A SKETCH OF THE CAREER OF GEO. FREDERICK HAMILTON.

With Some Ability as an Amateur, he Picked up Enough Knowledge of Church Music to Play—The Organ in Chapel—He Afterwards Graduated Bachelor of Music.

For Church Life by Wm. Q. Phillips, Sarnia, Ontario.

George Frederick Hamilton, Mus. Bac., entered his modest apartments, consisting of studio and bedroom, threw off his coat, and, like a thoroughbred Englishman, stirred the fire. No Englishman can ever resist the temptation to stir the fire; besides it was a raw, chilly, east-windy sort of day, with alternate showers of sleet and rain, very disagreeable weather indeed, and within a week of Christmas. Having provoked a cheerful blaze, he meditatively warmed his coat-tails until the postman arrived with letters. One of these was in a clerical hand, reading: "The Vicar of St. Margaret's church begs to inform Mr. Hamilton that the position of organist has been filled."

"Just about what I expected," said Hamilton; "well, what next?" But the next letter was of no importance; the third was a dainty missive, plumply filling a square envelope. Evidently this also was just what he expected, for after a calm perusal, he deliberately filled a pipe, and lounged back in a big chair for a second reading. "Dearest George," the letter began, but just beyond this we need not transcribe. Those who have received love letters will readily reconstruct for themselves; to others it would be unintelligible set out in cold print. The accompanying pipe lasted out the second and third readings, and had ushered in a spell of cheerful day-dreaming, when it was suddenly dropped as Hamilton made a nervous examination of the contents of his pocket-book, and remarked, "What a nuisance—Christmas time too—well, there is no help for it at present."

Then followed a somewhat careful and minute examination into ways and means, which not only confirmed the basic fact that there was no money to spare, but it also indicated the approach of a period of financial stringency. In other words, Mr. Hamilton was hard up, with no relief in sight which would warrant any relaxation of extreme caution in the administration of his finances. Now there is nothing very original in being hard up, for it is an experience that comes to almost every one, sometimes sooner, sometimes later; but in this case it was distinctly annoying. It meant that he could not accept an invitation to visit his lady love at Christmas—a careful man, he had never before wanted the means for any modest and legitimate purpose; what was he coming to?

Young Hamilton was the son of a physician, who had enjoyed a good country practice for many years, and had given the boy a good education. But the doctor lost his health, his practice fell away, and expenses made heavy inroads on his small savings. In the meantime the son was at college, busy with his arts course, beyond which his mind was not fully made up. With some ability as an amateur, he had picked up enough knowledge of church music to play the organ in chapel. This brought him to the notice of Dr. Vandewater, who advised that he devote himself seriously to the art; then college work received a definite impetus; proper tuition was readily available, and our friend graduated Bachelor of Music just a month before his father's death.

The estate turned out badly. Most of it was required to purchase a small annuity for Mrs. Hamilton. George Frederick came in for a little ready money, and decided to purchase the teaching connection of a musician, who wished to retire owing to advancing age. But the goodwill turned out to be personal, rather than negotiable, and for all practical purposes Hamilton might as well have begun on his own account. Pupils were scarce, and it was difficult to meet expenses. If he could get a good appointment as organist, there was the rub; but there was nothing worth while offering; even St. Margaret's was a poor church, only it might have led to something better. There were other churches, of course, but no vacancies, except—well it was not exactly a vacancy, and not to be thought of in any case. The organist of the cathedral was an old man, and dying, but the music went on under the capable supervision of the sub-organist, himself a man of parts, and very successful with boys.

For a few weeks, however, Hamilton had "presided at the organ" of the meeting house of the Saints of Israel, an exclusive and bumptious set. The pay was small, the prospects nil, and the work uninteresting, often annoying. Most of the music was of the Gospel-song variety, but the organist had nothing to do with selecting it. Everything was managed by the chief musician, Brother David, a conceited, domineering man, gifted with a large, wild voice, and a hazy—very hazy—knowledge of music. Rehearsals consisted of the repeated playing over of the piece de resistance, the choir being invited or rather commanded by Brother David, to "catch on" and also to "chirp it out." Meanwhile he pounded time, or what he called time, with a small baseball club, and sang any part that took his fancy. To a rehearsal of this type, young Hamilton directed his steps in the evening; but in addition to the usual gospel songs an anthem was to be learned, as a concession to the Christmas season. Brother David distributed copies of Stainer's "O Zion That Bringest Good Tidings," told the organist to play it over, and ordered a general attack on the chorus. The result was chiefly noise, the choir "catching on" in spots, while the voice of Brother David butted into one part after another, with the nice discrimination of a bull in a china shop.

"Better try the parts separately," suggested Hamilton.

"You leave that to me," growled Brother David. "Go on; the next is my solo." And after several false starts he thundered through the lovely pastoral melody. This was too much, even for the choir of Saints, and laughter was suppressed with difficulty. Still determined to shine, Brother David essayed the tenor of the second verse, ordering the basses to sing the lower part. "No—nobody sang correctly, the choir-master lost his temper, and blamed the organist. Hamilton listened impatiently. "There is just one thing to be done," he replied in a seriously level tone, "and that is for you and the other men to learn their parts separately before attempt-

ing to sing them together."

Brother David turned purple. "You—you mean to tell me that I do not know my part?" he sputtered.

"Exactly," said Hamilton, and then the storm burst. Ten minutes later he locked up the organ, and walked out, leaving Brother David to finish the rehearsal as best he might. Morning brings counsel. Of course a man like Hamilton could not hold such a position with any satisfaction or self-respect; but the Saints owed him some money, which he might have trouble in collecting. Perhaps it would be better to patch things up for a while; anyway it would bear thinking about. There was a lesson to give at ten o'clock; like a sensible man he started for a brisk walk. Presently he met the Dean, to whom he had once been introduced, and was about to pass with a formal salute. The Dean stopped and peered at him; the old man did not see well. "Mr. Hamilton, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And you are an organist?"

"Yes."

"Well, how strange that I should meet you; perhaps you know that the organist of the cathedral has been ill for a long time. I am afraid he will not last much longer. But Mr. Selwyn, the deputy, has kept everything going. Now he has the offer of an excellent position, if he can leave immediately. We must not stand in his way, but to release him we need some competent person at once. Now what experience have you had?" Hamilton told him.

"Bless me," said the Dean, "Trinity—my old college, and you studied with Dr. Vandewater. I know him well, and had thought of telegraphing him. Come to the cathedral this afternoon, for Evensong, at half-past three; the choir vestry is on the north side."

The sky cleared, and the sun shone out brilliantly, as Hamilton entered the cathedral close, and found his way to the thousand-year-old room that served for a choir vestry. The Dean introduced Mr. Selwyn, the deputy organist. "Glad to meet you, I am sure," said Selwyn. "You sing, of course?" A boy was sent for cassock and surplice.

"Come in with us now, and after service we will look at the organ." So the little procession filed its way into the chancel; Hamilton felt like a wanderer who, returning home, finds himself once more on a familiar road.

"The console is rather complex," Selwyn explained, "but quite convenient when you get accustomed to it." Then followed a minute examination of stops, couplers, switches, push-buttons and pedals. At last Hamilton seated himself before the shining key-boards, and—rather gingerly—played a few hymn tunes. Selwyn looked at his watch. "I must leave you now," he said. "Don't hurry yourself, but stop the motor and cut out the batteries before you go. There is a general rehearsal to-night; it will give you a chance to meet the choir."

For the rest of the week, Hamilton spent most of his time at the cathedral. On Sunday evening he played the whole service, and Selwyn said good-bye, leaving him to sink or swim. The choir, of course, was in full running order, but the spirit of Christmas was abroad, and manifested itself as a spirit of mischief in the choir boys. Even the men were disinclined to work hard, and at the very last rehearsal before Christmas Day, nothing seemed to go well, except the traditional hymns. On the Day itself there was an early choral Eucharist, sung by a small choir; perhaps Hamilton was fidgety, but he thought it sounded very thin and weak.

All the heavy music came at Morning Prayer, and here the choir was in full strength, or rather more, for some old boys were present, and one of them was a singer of renown, who had recently made a success in oratorio; but he seemed delighted to find himself once more in his old stall. Still Hamilton was nervous and apprehensive; there were so many chances of slips and flaws, he was not quite sure of himself; what if he should make some absurd mistake? So he began the service with mind bent on details; the best he hoped for was to escape palpable blunders; and there were careless slips in the Psalms that set his teeth on edge. What would happen in the Te Deum, which was really difficult? Well, it was now or never. "Here endeth the first lesson," and Hamilton began the stately prelude in strict time, hoping for a firm and prompt attack, for the voices entered in the middle of a glowing phrase and carried it to a dignified climax.

The attack was not merely prompt; it was brilliant; never before had he heard the choir do anything quite so well. And before he realized it, he was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, and played with a freedom that would have threatened disaster on an ordinary occasion. Absorbed in his work, he no longer thought of failure; he felt the consciousness of power; the whole cathedral seemed to burst into music at the touch of his fingers. Once in a while it is good for a man to get on the mountain top; to rejoice as a giant to run his course.

The Bishop made an excellent discourse of the words: "The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain," which seemed to Hamilton a peculiar text. But he really too much clung to pay strict attention to the sermon. After the service the choir received fatherly congratulations from the Bishop, who in his quaint way referred to the beautiful provision of music, and also to our young friend, the organist, who was the latest addition to the cathedral staff. And this was not altogether a figure of speech. The Dean took Hamilton home to dinner, and there was a long chat afterwards.

"There will be a meeting of the Chapter to-morrow night," said the Dean, "and if you are satisfied with the position, I think there will be no difficulty in appointing you deputy organist at once. The office carries a fair stipend."

A few days later Hamilton was informed that Brother David wished to see him, but that an apology would be expected. So he replied: "Dear Brother David, I shall be glad to see you at any time—at the cathedral; the music will do you good. Never mind about an apology."

**For Honest Quality.**  
On a letterhead of a large manufacturing firm are three cuts, those of father, son, and grandson, with the words,—"Three generations—Those who have and will continue to make—famous." It may be safely said that any article famous for three generations represents character of the highest quality. One of the best forms of service a man can render his country is that his work shall be of so sound and faithful a quality, that those coming after may point to it with honest pride.



A scene from "The Blue Mouse" at the Grand on Thursday, January 13th.

### THE FLIPPANT PRESS.

#### The Cardinal Was Worried For Years Over the Button.

New York is startled. Mrs. Caroline Astor's gold dinner set is only gold-plated. From time to time comes information to prove that the inhabitants of Millionaires' Row have more sense than was imagined.

A British correspondent announces that he has bought a collar button in a building formerly Cardinal Wolsey's palace. And no doubt the Cardinal was worried for years because he couldn't find the illusive thing.

We find nothing in the diary of Baron Munchausen that makes us ashamed of Dr. Cook. Really now, the Cook incident has served a certain good purpose; it has prepared us for the 1910 seed catalogue.

The superiority of man to nature is continually illustrated. Nature needs an immense quantity of quills to make a goose with, but a man can make a goose of himself with one.

That widow, the legal guardian of five step-children, who has married a Baltimore widower who has seven children, apparently believes in avoiding race suicide by proxy.

Dr. Cook has been expelled from the Explorers' Club. This is unreasonable, as he seems to have explored the field of fiction pretty thoroughly.

A Cincinnati man has left \$150,000 for the cause of public music. The executors might have found a fund for the elimination of the hand-organ man.

There really appear to be some feminine natures to which the whine of a cur is more irresistible than the moan of a human being. A Houston newspaper has read Dr. Cook out of the Democratic party for "absence from the polls in a time of emergency."

The American parlor is disappearing, says an architectural journal. But not so rapidly as the parlor maid.

A Texas woman wants a divorce because her husband is too tall. Poor woman, married above her.

### Under Sealed Orders.

Out she swung from her moorings,  
And over the harbor bar;  
As the moon was slowly rising  
She faded from sight afar,  
And we traced her gleaming canvas  
By the twinkling evening star.

None knew the port she sailed for,  
Nor whether her cruise would be;  
Her future course she shrouded  
In silence and mystery;  
She was sailing under "sealed orders,"  
To be opened out at sea.

So souls, cut off from moorings—  
Gone drifting into the night,  
Darkness before and around them,  
With scarce a glimmer of light;  
They are acting under "sealed orders,"  
And sailing by faith, not sight.

### Keeping the Line of Duty.

Through good and evil report,  
They shall ride the storms out safely,  
Be the passage long or short;  
For the ship that carries God's orders  
Shall anchor at last in port.

### Living in Glass House.

The little ones are natural born imitators and would rather copy any day than carry out any abstract illustrations. Can you expect your son to be honest when he hears you put off tradespeople on the ground that you have not the money, when you really have it, but don't want to pay the bill just then? And can you expect that your daughter will not deceive you when she hears you tell the maid repeatedly that you are not at home when you are?

How about teaching self-control when you lose your temper at the slightest provocation and mope over every little bad turn that happens to you. And what about self-respect and neatness when you go about the house in shabby garments or feshable, and when you gossip over subjects which belong to the yellow papers?

### Pass This Message On.

If you work for a man, in all fairness work for him. If he pays wages that supply you your bread and butter, work for him, speak well of him, think of him, stand by him, and stand by the institution he represents. Do not work for him a part of the time, but all of the time. Live an undivided service or none. If put to the pinch, an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness. If you must condemn and disparage, resign your position, and when you are outside, vilify to your heart's content. But, so long as you are a part of an institution, do not condemn it. Not that you will injure the institution of which you are a part, but disparage yourself.

### And silver money unearthed from among the ruins, the town dates back two centuries before the birth of Christ.

The edifices contain all kinds of domestic utensils, pots, urns and vases. The high civilizations attained by the inhabitants is shown by the way they built in several stories, by the symmetry of the streets and squares, and by the beauty of the baked clay and metal utensils, and of the ornaments and coins found. It is supposed that long centuries ago this city, carefully concealed in the bowels of the earth, provided large numbers of people with a refuge from the incursions of nomadic savages and robbers.

### Story of Masterpiece.

On the wall of the old monastery in Milan hangs the famous "Last Supper" of Leonardo da Vinci. Like every masterpiece, the painting required many years of patient labor, and, as a result of that labor, it is perfect in its naturalness of expression and sublime in its story of love. An incident in its history contributes not a little toward making it a great teacher. The artist, in painting the faces of the Apostles, studied the countenances of good men he knew. When, however, he was ready to paint the face of Jesus he could find none that would satisfy his conception; the face must be dignified in its simplicity and majestic in its sweetness. After several years of search the painter happened to meet Pietro Bandinelli, a choir boy of exquisite voice, belonging to the cathedral. Being struck by beautiful features and tender manner that bespoke an angelic soul, the artist induced the boy to be the study for the painting of the face of Jesus.

All was done most carefully and reverently, but the picture was yet incomplete, for the face of Judas was absent. Again the painter, with the zeal of his art, set about in search of a countenance that might serve for the traitor. Years passed before his search was rewarded and the picture finally completed. As the artist was about to dismiss his model, the man said, "You have painted me before." To his great surprise the painter learned that the man was Pietro Bandinelli. During those intervening years Pietro had been at Rome studying music, had met with evil companions, had given himself up to drinking and gambling, had fallen into shameful dissipation and crime. The face now the model for Judas had once been the model for that of Christ.

### Good Health of Army.

The improved condition of the British Army, shown in the reports of the Medical Department, is continued. In 1900 the death ratio per 1,000 of troops at home and abroad was 9.05. This fell to 7.13 in 1903, and again to 4.78 last year. The ratio of the sick, at its highest, 51.8, in 1901, fell to 32.28 last year. These improved returns mean that "the effective strength has been raised, by 5,776 men, and the wastage through deaths and invaliding has been reduced by 2,900 men per annum." Many causes combine to bring this about—care in recruiting, improved treatment of diseases, better appliances for operations, and, perhaps beyond all, improved sanitation. The deaths from consumption are low, the rate being 150 to a million soldiers, or about one-tenth of the death-rate among civilians in many parts of the country. This is doubtless due to physical training, and the supporters of compulsory service will find it an effective argument.

### Three Taps And Awake.

"The Old-Time Parson" tells of odd happenings. A curious scene in an old church in Lancashire, was described by the late Rev. John Brame. He was preaching for the Curates' Society. The church had a three-decker pulpit, and, before the preacher ascended to its topmost storey, the rector remarked:

"When you have finished your discourse will you have the goodness to lean over and tap me on the head, and then I will lean over and tap the clerk on the head, and then we will have the collection."

This surprising performance was effectively carried out, and gravely; the clerk sprang up to attention and handed round the plate. Possibly the rector feared that sleep might seal the eyes of himself and his faithful sermons, and to prevent a catastrophe this ingenious device was adopted.

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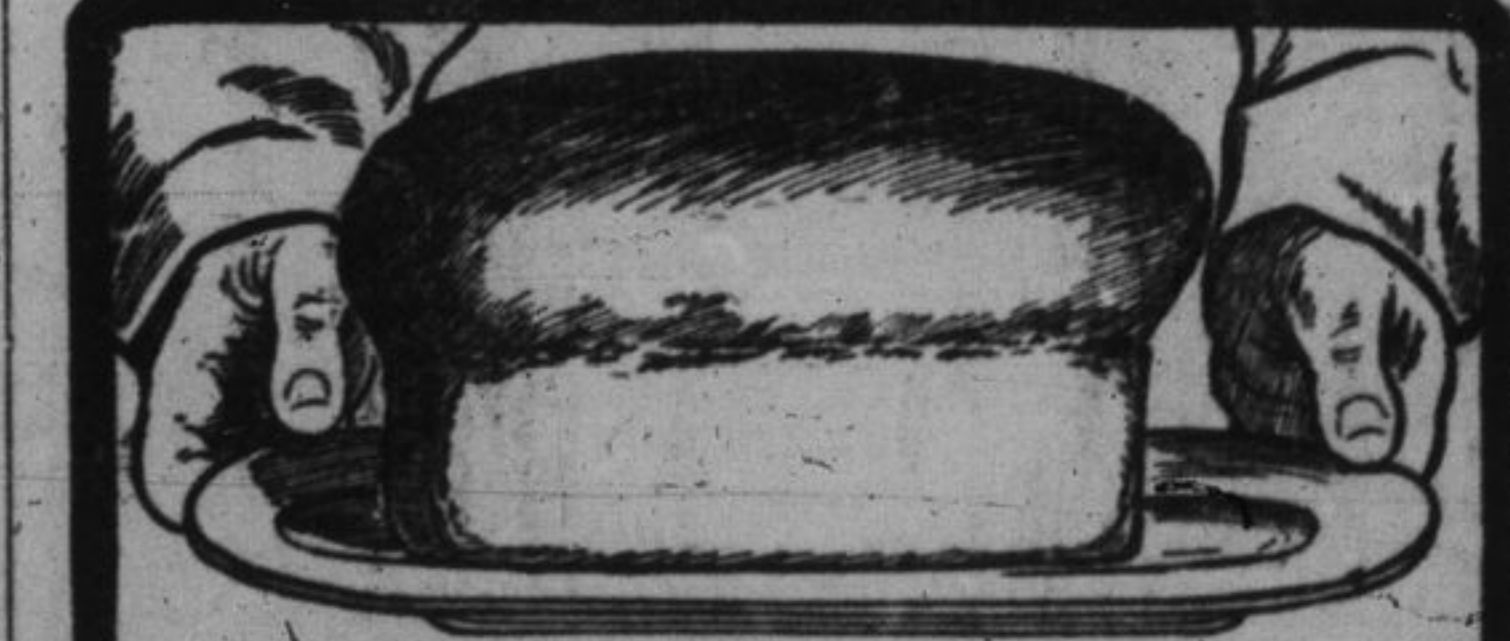
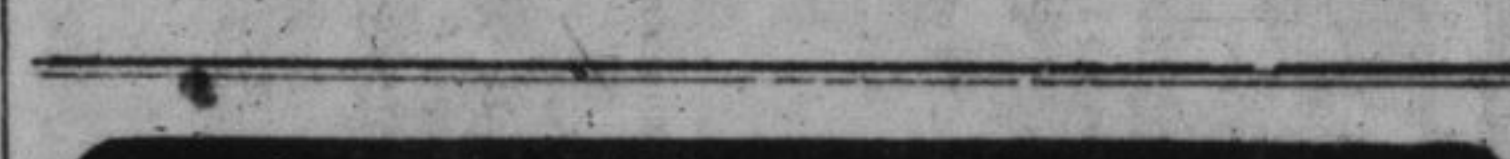
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