

PRINCE OF ORGANISTS

W. T. BEST (1826–1897)
AND THE
SPIRIT OF VICTORIAN ENTERPRISE
(3 VOLUMES)

VOLUME 1

ROGER DIXON TEBBET

D. PHIL.

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

SEPTEMBER 1992

*...Mr. W. T. Best...who, in England, was justly designated the
"Prince of Organists"...*

**Obituary of W. T. Best (1826-1897)
(*The Musical Times*, 1st June 1897)**

ABSTRACT

This work is the study of a great 19th century musician. Although William Thomas Best (1826-1897) was regarded as one of the great performers of his day, who inaugurated a new style of playing and writing for his instrument, the organ, he has never been the subject of a full-scale study. The present work considers Best's many and varied musical achievements within the context of Victorian England, and also in the wider context of 19th century musical developments. The writer has compiled the first detailed catalogue of Best's output as composer, editor and arranger, and also collected together concert programmes and correspondence, in order to present the clearest picture possible of the man and the musician.

CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

	<i>Page</i>
<i>List of illustrations</i>	10
<i>Preface</i>	18
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	21
<i>Abbreviations</i>	24
PART 1 – FORCES AT WORK	
PRELUDE	26
CHAPTER 1 – The Victorian City and Civic Consciousness	30
CHAPTER 2 – The Development of the 19th Century Town Hall Organ	39
The Organ as a Secular Instrument	
The Spectacular in Music-making	
The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach	
(a) Compass	
(b) Pedals	
(c) Contrasting choruses	
(d) Temperament and tuning	
The Application of 19th century technology to organ building	
The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall	
CHAPTER 3 – The Great Exhibition of 1851	72
The Opening of the Great Exhibition	
The Exhibits	
CHAPTER 4 – The Organs at the Great Exhibition	88
'...the first successful large organ yet constructed in England...'	
The Visit of the Liverpool Law Courts Committee to the Great Exhibition	
The Young Organist from Liverpool	
POSTLUDE – Eminent Victorians	98

PART 2 – BEST BEFORE 1855

CHAPTER 5 – W. T. Best's Family 101

The Death of William Best
Catherine Best and Mary Anne Best
Frederick Warmingham Best
William Thomas Best

CHAPTER 6 – The Early Career of W. T. Best 112

The move to Liverpool
Best's '...rigid course of self-study...'
Pembroke Road Baptist Chapel, Liverpool
The Church for the Blind, Liverpool
The Liverpool Philharmonic Society
Composer, Arranger and Editor
The Turning Point

CHAPTER 7 – W. T. Best in London 134

The visit to Spain
Marriage
The Royal Panopticon of Science and Art
(a) The Spirit of 1851
(b) The Building
(c) The Exhibits
(d) Music at the Royal Panopticon
(e) The Organ at the Royal Panopticon
(f) Organist and Professor of Music
(g) W. T. Best's departure
(h) The failure of the Royal Panopticon
Church Organist in London
(a) St. Martin-in-the-Fields
(b) Lincoln's Inn Chapel

CHAPTER 8 – The Return to Liverpool 174

PART 3 – THE PLACE AND THE PERSON

CHAPTER 9 – St. George's Hall, Liverpool 181

The Organ in St. George's Hall
A Victorian Ideal

W. T. Best's health

PART 4 – A GREAT ARTIST AND A REMARKABLE MAN

CHAPTER 11 – The Civic Musician

224

CHAPTER 12 – The Virtuoso Organist

244

'...an indispensable element of music...'

W. T. Best the Virtuoso

- (a) Technical mastery
- (b) Registration
- (c) Best's Performances
- (d) Repertoire
- (e) Platform manner
- (f) Best the 'personality'

The Travelling Virtuoso

- (a) General
- (b) Town Halls
 - (i) The Royal Albert Hall
 - (ii) The Queen's Hall

The International Virtuoso

- (a) Italy
- (b) Australia

CHAPTER 13 – The Handel Festivals

286

CHAPTER 14 – A Nation of Choirsingers

299

W. T. Best and 19th century choralism
The Liverpool Philharmonic Society

CHAPTER 15 – Church Organist

319

- (a) Hymns and Hymn Tunes
- (b) The Psalms
- (c) Services, Anthems etc.
- (d) W. T. Best as Choirmaster
- (e) W. T. Best's playing at other Churches
- (f) The Church Congress in Liverpool
- (g) Organ Music for the Offertory
- (h) The Church Musician

- (1) Tonal Design
 - (a) Organ tone
 - (b) String tone
 - (c) Flute tone
 - (d) Reed tone
 - (e) Percussion stops
- (2) Pipe Materials
- (3) Wind Pressures
- (4) Organ Actions
- (5) Temperament
- (6) Console Design
 - (a) The position of the console
 - (b) The keyboards
 - (c) The Pedal board
 - (d) The position of the stop handles
 - (e) The position of the swell pedal
 - (f) Stop control
- (7) W. T. Best as Organ Designer
- (8) W. T. Best and the Organ Builders

CHAPTER 17 – The Complete Musician

396

Pianist
Conductor
Teacher

CHAPTER 18 – The Final Years

414

CHAPTER 19 – The Legacy

W. T. Best - the Player
W. T. Best - the Editor, Transcriber and Composer

- (1) Editor
- (2) Transcriber
- (3) Composer

CHAPTER 20 – Conclusion – W. T. Best and the Spirit of Victorian Enterprise

500

VOLUME 2

LIST OF REFERENCES

506

- (1) Manuscript Sources
- (2) Other Sources

NOTES

519

PART 1

- Prelude
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Chapter 4
- Postlude

PART 2

- Chapter 5
- Chapter 6
- Chapter 7
- Chapter 8

PART 3

- Chapter 9
- Chapter 10

PART 4

- Chapter 11
- Chapter 12
- Chapter 13
- Chapter 14
- Chapter 15
- Chapter 16
- Chapter 17
- Chapter 18
- Chapter 19
- Chapter 20

APPENDICES	616
APPENDIX 1 – W. T. Best's Family and Homes	617
(a) Family	
(b) Homes	
APPENDIX 2 – Letters 1849–1895	639
(a) Letters 1849-1895	
(b) Undated Letters	
(c) Sources of Manuscript Letters	
APPENDIX 3 – Concert Programmes 1841–1894	671
APPENDIX 4 – W. T. Best and the Performance of J. S. Bach's Organ Music	740
APPENDIX 5 – Organ Designs by W. T. Best	798

VOLUME 3

CATALOGUE OF COMPOSITIONS, EDITIONS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

PART 1 – Manuscript Sources	5
PART 2 – Original Compositions	12
(1) Music for Organ	
(2) Music for Pianoforte	
(3) Music for Orchestra	
(4) Church Music	
(5) Secular Choral and Vocal Music	
(6) Tutors	
PART 3 – Editions and Transcriptions	75

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES and MUSICAL EXAMPLES

1. An artist's impression of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, and its surroundings (Liverpool City Library)
2. Houses and Railway Viaduct (Engraving by Doré)
3. South-east view of Sheffield. Watercolour c.1854 by William Ibbitt (Sheffield City Museums)
4. Liverpool Town Hall
5. St. George's Hall and Lime Street. Watercolour by R. H. Bantham, 1862 (Walker Art Gallery)
6. The console of the organ in Gloucester Cathedral after the rebuild by Henry Willis in 1847
7. Vauxhall Gardens (Guildhall Library, London)
8. A view of the orchestra and singers in Westminster at the Commemoration of Handel in 1784
9. The 'fantastique' Berlioz (Caricature by Cajot)
10. Jullien conducting (Gouache by Alfred Edward Chalon, 1841)
11. Koenig, cornet-à-pistons soloist at Jullien's concerts
12. Jullien's orchestra at the Surrey Gardens, 1845
13. The British Army Quadrilles, Covent Garden, 1846
14. Exeter Hall, London (Andrew Freeman/B. B. Edmonds)
15. St. James', Bermondsey - console (Andrew Freeman/British Organ Archive)
16. Watercolour of the original competition design for Birmingham Town Hall by W. Harris
17. The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall c.1846 (Birmingham Central Library, Local Studies Department)
18. A drawing of the interior of Birmingham Town Hall during the 1834 Music Festival by Henry Harris
19. The first performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (*Illustrated London News*, 29th August 1846)
20. The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall after rebuilding and restoration 1984 (Birmingham Town Hall)
21. The façade of Cavallé-Coll's organ for St. Denis Abbey near Paris, 1846.
22. Henry Cole (1808-1882) (*Illustrated London News*, July 1873)
23. The design by the Building Committee for an exhibition building
24. Joseph Paxton (1801-1865)
25. Paxton's original sketch for what was to become the Crystal Palace
26. General view of the building of the Crystal Palace (*Illustrated London News*)

27. View of the Crystal Palace from the north bank of the Serpentine (Lithograph by Brannan, 1851)
28. The Crystal Palace from the north-west
29. *The Illustrated London News*, 17th May 1851
30. The inauguration of the Great Exhibition of 1851
31. Omnibus to the Great Exhibition (Etching by Cruikshank)
32. 'Greek Slave' by Hirem Power
33. Penknife with 1,851 blades
34. 'Moving Machinery' (Dickinson, 1851)
35. Willis's Exhibition Organ
36. Willis's Exhibition Organ in the West Gallery of the Crystal Palace
37. The Exhibition Organ by Gray & Davison
38. The Exhibition Organ by Ducroquet of Paris
39. Part of the Overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, transcribed for organ by W. T. Best (Novello)
40. *The Carlisle Journal*, 30th January 1847
41. *The Carlisle Journal*, 6th January 1860
42. St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle (Roger D. Tebbet)
43. Carlisle Cathedral (Roger D. Tebbet)
44. The Churchyard at Stanwix (Roger D. Tebbet)
45. Scotch Street, Carlisle (Roger D. Tebbet)
46. 8, Castle Street, Carlisle (Roger D. Tebbet)
47. Carlisle Market Cross from English Street, 1835, by W. H. Nutter (Carlisle Museum and Art Gallery)
48. *The Carlisle Journal*, 27th February 1841
49. *The Carlisle Journal*, 6th March 1841
50. Chromolithograph c.1841-45 by Henry Alken.
51. Advertisements from *The Carlisle Journal*
52. Programme of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society concert of 27th August 1846 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
53. The Opening of the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool (*Illustrated London News*, 1st September 1849 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society))
54. Grand Miscellaneous Concert on Tuesday 28th August 1849 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
55. Liverpool Philharmonic Society Autograph Book, 31st August 1849 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
56. Concert on 17th December 1850 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
57. Liverpool Philharmonic Society Autograph Book, 17th December 1850 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
58. W. T. Best - Fantasia for Organ Op.1 (Novello)
59. The manuscript of W. T. Best's transcription of the Andante con moto from Beethoven's Symphony No.5 (Liverpool City Library)
60. Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert of 9th April 1850 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
61. Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert of 5th October 1850 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
62. 'Canon 4 in 2 - in the octave' from the manuscript of W. T. Best's *Practical Composition* (Liverpool City Library)
63. The opening of W. T. Best's *Une Nuit dans Seville* for pianoforte (Hammond)
64. W. T. Best's manuscript arrangement/edition of Hilarión Eslava's *Offertorio* (Liverpool City Library)
65. Copy of the Marriage Certificate of William Thomas Best and Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria Linari (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys)

66. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 18th February 1939
67. Title-page of of W. T. Best's *Notturmo* Op.27 for piano (Schott)
68. *Musical World* Vol.xxxi, No.17, 23rd April 1853
69. The Ascending Carriage (*The Hand Book of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art*)
70. The façade of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester Square
71. *The Musical World* Vol.xxxii, No.45, 11th November 1854
72. The Rotunda of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art
73. The Organ by Hill in the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art
74. *The Musical World*, 3rd June 1854
75. *Aladdin* (Royal Polytechnic slide)
76. *Russian Officers in the Crimea* (Royal Polytechnic slide)
77. Title-page of W. T. Best's manuscript *Thematic Index to Music for the Dioramas* (Liverpool City Library)
78. *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp* (Liverpool City Library)
79. *Aladdin and Scenes in the Crimea* (Liverpool City Library)
80. W. T. Best - *Military Fantasia* (Liverpool City Library)
81. The Alhambra under the management of E. T. Smith
82. Trafalgar Square and St. Martin-in-the-Fields (National Gallery)
83. The organ in St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 1854. (drawing by H. T. Lilley)
84. St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Watercolour by Goodchild (Walker Art Gallery)
85. *Illustrated London News*, 23rd September 1854
86. St. George's Hall, Liverpool (Liverpool City Library)
87. The organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool (Gilbert Benham)
88. The original organ console, St. George's Hall, Liverpool (Gilbert Benham)
89. Diagram of the organ console at St. George's Hall, Liverpool (*Musical Standard*, 25th April 1896)
90. Professor Cockerell's design for the organ case in St. George's Hall, Liverpool.
91. The Great Hall, St. George's Hall, Liverpool (*The Builder*, Vol. xiii, 1855)
92. One of the doors of St. George's Hall (Gilbert Benham)
93. Dr. D. B. Reid's plans for the warming and ventilation system for St. George's Hall, Liverpool (Liverpool City Library)
94. The Great Hall, St. George's Hall, Liverpool, showing the floor of Minton tiles by Grüner
95. The organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, as it is today
96. St. George's Hall, Liverpool, in the 19th century
97. St. George's Hall, Liverpool, in the 20th century (Roger D. Tebbet)
98. St. George's Hall, Liverpool, as it is today (Roger D. Tebbet)
99. W. T. Best as a young man, probably c.1855
100. Plaster cast of the hand of W. T. Best
101. Sketch by W. T. Best, 1863 (Liverpool City Library)
102. W. T. Best in middle age (Liverpool City Library)
103. W. T. Best - *Toccata in A for Organ* (Ricordi)
104. W. T. Best in later life
105. Drawing of W. T. Best (*Liverpool Review*, 24th February 1894)

106. Concert in St. George's Hall, 10th October 1855 (Liverpool City Library)
107. W. T. Best – manuscript sketch of *Fantasia on Scotch Airs* (Liverpool City Library)
108. Title-page of the manuscript of W. T. Best's *Danish and English National Airs* (Liverpool City Library)
109. Programme of one of Best's 'popular' recitals (Liverpool City Library)
110. Programme of the 'People's Concert' on 24th January 1857 (Liverpool City Library)
111. Programme of the 'Grand Concert' on 20th September 1859 (Liverpool City Library)
112. The Illuminated Scroll presented to W. T. Best on his retirement (Liverpool City Engineers Department)
113. The Bust of W. T. Best by Conrad Dressler (Walker Art Gallery)
114. Part of the Overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* transcribed for organ by W. T. Best (Novello)
115. *The Glasgow Herald*, 23rd November 1877
116. The Cavallé-Coll organ in Manchester Town Hall (Manchester Town Hall)
117. The Willis organ in the Royal Albert Hall, London
118. The opening of the Royal Albert Hall on the 29th March 1871
119. W. T. Best's programme of 'Sacred Music' on the 23rd July 1871 (Royal Albert Hall)
120. Royal Albert Hall 'Penny Subscription Concerts' (Royal Albert Hall)
121. Sheet showing W. T. Best's fee for playing at a 'Penny Subscription Concert' (Royal Albert Hall)
122. The organ in the Queen's Hall, London
123. William Stevenson Hoyte (Royal College of Music)
124. The original design by Arthur G Hill of the organ-case for Sydney Town Hall (British Organ Archive)
125. W. T. Best at the time of his visit to Australia (National Portrait Gallery)
126. The organ in the Centennial Hall, Sydney
127. The console of the organ in the Centennial Hall, Sydney
128. Programme of the 'Selection Day' Concert of the 1871 Handel Festival (Novello)
129. The opening of W. T. Best's manuscript copy of the organ part of Handel's Organ Concerto in G minor (Op.4, No.1) (Liverpool City Library)
130. Sketches made at the 1874 Handel Festival (*The Graphic*, 27th June 1874)
131. Title-page of the Concerto in Bb (Op.7, No.3) which Best played at the Bi-centenary Festival of 1885, and subsequently edited for organ and orchestra (Augener)
132. The opening of Best's arrangement for string orchestra of the Minuet from Handel's *Berenice* which was performed at the 1891 Festival (Schott)
133. The organ in the Crystal Palace, built by Gray & Davison for the Handel Festivals
134. A Handel Festival Concert at the Crystal Palace
135. Sir August Manns and the Handel Festival (*Musical Opinion*, 1st August 1894)

136. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's *Messiah* (Novello)
137. Part of W. T. Best' manuscript organ-part for Handel's *Israel in Egypt* (Liverpool City Library)
138. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Mozart's *Requiem Mass* (Novello)
139. Programme of the first concert by the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
140. Liverpool Philharmonic Society Subscription Concerts 1873 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
141. Minutes of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 26th February 1894 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
142. Sullivan - *The Prodigal Son* (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
143. W. T. Best's manuscript organ part for Stanford's *The Three Holy Children* (Liverpool City Library)
144. W. T. Best's manuscript organ part for Randegger's *Fridolin* (Liverpool City Library)
145. Programmes for Stanford's *The Three Holy Children* and Randegger's *Fridolin* (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
146. The Organ Prelude to W. T. Best's setting of *The Old Hundredth Psalm* (Augener)
147. Verses 2 and 3 of W. T. Best's setting of *The Old Hundredth Psalm* (Augener)
148. The title-page of W. T. Best's *Eighty Chorales* (Hime)
149. One of the hymn tunes specially composed for *Eighty Chorales* by W. T. Best (Hime)
150. *The Last Compositions of W. T. Best* (Vincent)
151. Two of the plainsong tunes from *Chants for Four Voices* (Novello)
152. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Psalter pointed and adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant* (Novello)
153. The setting of Psalm 89 from W. T. Best's *Psalter pointed and adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant* (Novello)
154. Holy Trinity Church, Walton Breck, Liverpool
155. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Morning and Evening Service* Op.40 (Novello)
156. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Morning and Evening Service in simple chant form* (Novello)
157. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Morning and Evening Service based on the Ancient Gregorian Plain Chant* (Novello)
158. W. T. Best's manuscript *Organ Music for the Offertory* (Liverpool City Library)
159. W. T. Best, from a panel in the Choir Vestry of the Priory Church of St. Mary and St. Bega, St. Bees, Cumbria
160. W. T. Best's manuscript design for a '5 rank Cornet' (Liverpool City Library)
161. W. T. Best's manuscript design for a '4 rank Sesquialtera' (Liverpool City Library)
162. Advertisement for the Hope-Jones Electric Organ Company Ltd.
163. The 'Orgue du Choeur' at the Church of La Trinité, Paris (Roger D. Tebbet)
164. The organ in Manchester Town Hall

165. The organ at the Victoria Hall, Sheffield
166. The console of the organ in the King's College, the Strand, London, by Henry Willis, 1854
167. The console of the Cavallé-Coll organ in the Victoria Hall, Sheffield
168. The illustration of an organ console from W. T. Best's *First Organ Book* (Boosey)
169. Diagram from W. T. Best's *Specification of Proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton*, April 1872
170. Diagram from W. T. Best's *Specification of Proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton*, April 1872
171. The Cavallé-Coll organ in the Victoria Hall, Sheffield
172. The organ in Bolton Town Hall
173. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Specification of Proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton*, April 1872
174. Entry in the Ledger for 1884 (J. W. Walker & Sons Ltd.)
175. Aristide Cavallé-Coll
176. William Hill (Hill, Norman & Beard)
177. Henry Willis
178. Robert Hope-Jones (Vestal Press)
179. Portrait of W. T. Best (*The Monthly Musical Record*, September 1926)
180. Programme of Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert, 28th April 1863 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
181. Programme of Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert, 9th April 1850 (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society)
182. Title-page of W. T. Best's *Modern School for the Organ* (Cocks)
183. Title-page of W. T. Best's *The Art of Organ Playing* (Novello)
184. Title-page of W. T. Best's *First Organ Book* (Boosey)
185. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Rinck's *Practical Organ School* (Novello)
186. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Lemmen's *Organ School* (Schott)
187. A page from the manuscript of W. T. Best's *Practical Composition* (Liverpool City Library)
188. Bronze of W. T. Best (National Portrait Gallery)
189. Copy of W. T. Best's Death Certificate (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys)
190. The Grave of W. T. Best (Roger D. Tebbet)
191. The Grave of W. T. Best (Roger D. Tebbet)
192. Portrait of W. T. Best (*Musical Standard*, 15th May 1897)
193. W. T. Best (*Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1894)
194. Letter from Amalia Best to J. M. Levien (Liverpool City Library)
195. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's *Messiah* (Novello)
196. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's *Jubilate* (Novello)
197. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Mozart's *Requiem Mass* (Novello)
198. 'Vo far guerra' from Handel's *Rinaldo* showing the passage added by W. T. Best (Boosey)
199. The opening of the Prelude in C from W. T. Best's edition of Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* (Novello)
200. The opening of Mendelssohn's First Sonata for Organ in the edition by W. T. Best (Novello)

201. The opening of a Fantasia and Fugue by Buxtehude from *Organ Compositions, Ancient and Modern* edited by W. T. Best (Cocks)
202. Samuel Wesley's 'Gavotte' as edited by W. T. Best (Augener)
203. Samuel Wesley's Fugue in G as edited by W. T. Best (Augener)
204. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's *Organ Concerto in B flat Op.7* for organ and orchestra (Augener)
205. The opening of the first movement of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's *Concerto in B flat* for organ and orchestra (Augener)
206. W. T. Best's cadenza for the first movement of Handel's *Concerto in B flat* for organ and orchestra (Augener)
207. W. T. Best's manuscript organ part for the Handel's *Concerto in G minor* for organ and orchestra (Liverpool City Library Dq 1466)
208. The opening of the *Magnificat* from W. T. Best's *Evening Service adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant* (Novello)
209. W. T. Best's 'Directions to the Engravers' (Liverpool City Library Dq 1474)
210. Manuscript sketch of W. T. Best's transcription of the *Tempo di Marcia* from Spohr's 4th Symphony (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282)
211. Manuscript sketch of W. T. Best's transcription of J. L. Hatton's Overture *Gutenberg* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282)
212. Beethoven, transcribed W. T. Best, Symphony No.7 - *scherzo* (Novello)
213. Beethoven, transcribed W. T. Best, Septet - variations (Novello)
214. Bach, transcribed W. T. Best, Partita No.2 - *chaconne* (Novello)
215. Mozart, transcribed W. T. Best, '*Deh vieni alla finestra*' (Schott)
216. Mozart, transcribed W. T. Best, Symphony No.39 - minuet (Liverpool City Library Dq 1649)
217. Handel, transcribed W. T. Best (for pianoforte), *Berenice* - minuet (Schott)
218. Handel, transcribed W. T. Best (for strings), *Berenice* - minuet (Schott)
219. W. T. Best, manuscript sketch of *Andante con variazione* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476)
220. W. T. Best, manuscript sketch of *Fantasia Pastorale* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1649)
221. W. T. Best, Fugue in A minor (Op.2, No.1) for organ (Novello)
222. W. T. Best, *Tarantella*, Op.10 for pianoforte (Schott)
223. W. T. Best, *Valse di bravura*, Op.20 for pianoforte (Schott)
224. Programme of the 'Grand Miscellaneous Concert' held on 23rd September 1875 at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich
225. W. T. Best '*Autumn thoughts*' (Novello)
226. W. T. Best, manuscript of *Serenade: 'Look out upon the stars'* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476)
227. W. T. Best, manuscript of *Fantasia on a Chorale* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282)
228. W. T. Best, manuscript of *Rêverie Religieuse* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282)
229. W. T. Best, *Concert Fantasia on a Welsh March* (Augener)
230. W. T. Best, *Paraphrase on Rossini's Preghiera: 'Giusto Ciel'* (Augener)
231. W. T. Best, *Fantaisie-Étude*, Op.15 (Novello)
232. W. T. Best, Sonata No.2 in D minor - Romanza (Augener - *Cecilia* Book xxix)
233. W. T. Best, Festival Overture in Bb (Augener - *Cecilia* Book liv)
234. W. T. Best, Fantasia and Fugue in E minor (Augener - *Cecilia* Book v)
235. W. T. Best, Andante with variations (Augener - *Cecilia* Book xxviii)

- 236. W. T. Best, *Twelve Short Preludes on English Psalm Tunes* - No.4
(Augener - *Cecilia* Book xv)
- 237. 1861 census return for the Best family
- 238. 1871 census return for the Best family
- 239. 1881 census return for the Best family
- 240. The Best Family Tree
- 241. Map of Liverpool c.1855
- 242. 75, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 243. 6, Catherine Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 244. Grove Street [possibly 202], Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 245. 59, Hope Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 246. 156, Chatham Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 247. Huskisson Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 248. Bedford Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 249. 95, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 250. 4, Seymour Road, Broad Green, near Liverpool (Roger D. Tebbet)
- 251. The site of 11, Seymour Road, Broad Green, near Liverpool
(Roger D. Tebbet)
- 252. W. T. Best's handwriting from a letter in the possession of Roger
D. Tebbet

FIGURES

- 1. Mechanical-pneumatic organ key-action - the 'Barker-lever'
- 2. The 'Venetian' swell
- 3. A reconstruction by R. D. Tebbet of the position of the stop-
handles on the console of the organ at Bolton Town Hall

PREFACE

Although W. T. Best is regarded, by common consent, as the greatest organ player of the 19th century, and a musician of considerable importance, no full scale study of his life and works has yet been written. At the time of his retirement, biographical sketches appeared in *The Liverpool Review* (24th February 1894:3) and *Musical Opinion* (1st May 1894:499-500, by F. J. Livesey), and the obituaries, written after Best's death in 1897, were fulsome in their praise of his achievements.

Although Harvey Grace was to write in *The Musical Times* in 1926 that he hoped that '...the centenary of his birth will stir up some suitable writer to undertake the long overdue task of worthily commemorating a great artist and a remarkable man...' (*MT*, 1st August 1926:692), Havergal Brian was to inquire, eleven years later as to '...what English organists are doing without a complete and authentic life of this greatest of all organists?...' (*Musical Opinion*, April 1937:585). In the time that had elapsed since 1897, a number of short articles on Best had appeared. H. Heathcote Statham devoted a chapter of his book *The Organ and its Position in Musical Art* (London, 1909) to Best, because, as he writes in the *Introduction* (page xvi), '...the late W. T. Best...has never since his death received any adequate recognition in print...'. Perhaps the most comprehensive and objective assessment was supplied by Orlando Mansfield in 'W. T. Best - His Life, Character and Works', which was published in the *Musical Quarterly* in 1918 (Vol.iv:208-249). The early 1920's saw the publication of four anecdotal articles in *Musical Opinion* (1921/1922) by Edward Watson.

The centenary of Best's birth in 1926 saw a renewal of interest. In addition to the article by Harvey Grace, mentioned above, *Musical Opinion* (September 1926:1212-1213) published Ernest Bryson's *W. T. Best: Musician and Cynic*. Reminiscences by W. J. Bowden and J. H. Kenion appeared in the Liverpool newspapers, and *The Daily Telegraph* of Saturday 14th August published 'W. T. Best - 1826-1926 - Some Personal Impressions', by John Mewburn Levien, the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Over the following

twenty years, Levien was to do more than anyone else to foster interest in W. T. Best's life and work.

Levien had known Best, and had corresponded with him after his retirement (see Appendix 2). Under the pseudonym of 'X' he wrote *Recollections of W. T. Best* in *Musical Opinion* (February–May 1937), presented the typescript of 'A Great Organist' to the Royal College of Organists in August 1938 and published 'A Great English Organist' in *The Monthly Musical Record* (September 1939:196–199). It would appear that Levien tried to persuade Dr. H. Lowery, Principal of the South-West Essex Technical College and School of Art, to write what was possibly to be a book on Best, but on 1st June 1940, Lowery wrote to Levien stating that '...owing to pressure of work arising out of the present national conditions...' he had given up any idea of writing such a work, and returned all Levien's material with the hope '...that in due course all the information you have accumulated may be published...' (Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES). In 1942 Levien's own book, *Impressions of W. T. Best* appeared, and was favourably received by Harvey Grace in the guise of 'Feste' (*Musical Times*, November 1942:339–341).

This modest volume, of some fifty–six pages, achieves no more or less than its title implies. A subjective portrait of Best and his achievements, which is largely based on anecdotal material, and is none the worse for being so. It is only to be regretted that Levien, who had known Best, and who may well have had access to information not available to a later writer, did not write a more detailed, scholarly and objective study. Levien presented all his material to Liverpool City Library where it is still available for study (Hq 920 BES). Since Levien's publication, very little has been written about Best, with the exception of J. A. Carr's *Hatton and Best of Liverpool* in 1951, Donald Webster's 'W. T. Best' in *Musical Opinion* (July 1982) and two articles on Best and organ design by Cecil Clutton (1975 & 1984). This is despite a revival of interest in Best's transcriptions, which have appeared in the recital programmes and recordings of such players as Nicolas Kynaston, Thomas Trotter, Johannes Geffert and Christopher Dearnley. A reflection of this state of affairs is that the references given by E. D. Mackerness for his entry on W. T. Best in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980 Vol.ii:662&663) are Statham (1909), Mansfield (1918) and Levien (1942).

Keith Elcombe, in a similar entry in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart Allgemeine Enzyklopädie Der Musik* (1973, Band 15:756–757) has no reference later than Levien (1942).

The aim of the present work is to examine W. T. Best's achievements as an organist and musician in the context of Victorian England and the musical life of the 19th century. The personality of the man, and his family background is also considered. Best's correspondence has been collected, as has a listing of surviving recital programmes. The writer has also compiled a detailed catalogue of Best's vast output as a composer, editor and transcriber.

ROGER D. TEBBET

York

September, 1992

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank all the following individuals and institutions for their very real help in diverse ways.

G. Acton (Birmingham)
R. Ampt (City Organist, Sydney, Australia).
M. Bennett (Keeper of British Art, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool).
Boosey and Hawkes Ltd..
Biblioteca dell'Instituto Nazionale D'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte, Rome.
Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, 'Vittoria Emanuelle II', Rome.
J. Bissett (Intern, Duke University, North Carolina, U.S.A).
W. N. Blakey (Brierfield).
C. Bornet (Reference Librarian, Royal College of Music).
D. M. Bowcock (Assistant County Archivist, Carlisle).
The British Organ Archive.
The British Library, Department of Manuscripts.
Rev. P. R. Bryan (Vicar, The Priory Church of St. Mary & St. Bega, St. Bees, Cumbria).
B. B. F. Buchanan (J. W. Walker & Sons Ltd.).
C. Cajal (Librarian, Instituto de España en Londres).
A. M. Calvo (Information Officer, The British Council, Madrid).
J. A. Carr (Hon Librarian, The Athenaeum, Liverpool).
D. R. Carrington (Editor, *The Organ*).
A. M. Cook D.Mus., F.R.C.O., Hon.F.R.C.C.O.. (Cheltenham).
R. Cowan (Archivist, Boosey & Hawkes Ltd.).
J. Cowdry (Records Room, Royal Albert Hall, London).
C. Clausetti (Archivist, Ricordi & Co. Ltd.).
C. Clutton (Ramsey, Isle of Man).
M. V. Cramner (Librarian, The Rowe Library, King's College, Cambridge).
Cumbria County Council Archive Service.
Cumbria County Library, Carlisle.
G. J. W. Cunliffe (Havergal Brian Society).
F. Douglass (U.S.A.).
Rev. B. B. Edmonds (Clare Sudbury, Suffolk).
L. Elvin (Lincoln).
F. N. Fowler F.I.S.O.B., F.I.M.I.T., F.R.S.A. (Hill, Norman & Beard).
S. Gaffney (Local Studies Librarian, Glasgow District Libraries).
S. Galliers (Production Assistant, Stainer & Bell Ltd.).
E. Garrigues (Cultural Counsellor, Spanish Embassy, London).
A. Gill (Eastbourne).
C. M. Hall (Higher Executive Officer, British Library, Department of Manuscripts).
C. T. L. Harrison M.B.E., T.D., M.A., F.I.M.I.T. (Harrison & Harrison Ltd.)
K. Henderson D.Phil. (Glasgow).
D. Henry (The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain).
H. W. Hodgson (Group Librarian, Cumbria County Library, Carlisle).
Professor Hudson (Faculty of Law, University of Liverpool).

C. Huggins (Archive Office, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London).
 J. D. Johnson (Hon. Librarian, Royal College of Organists).
 M. Jones (Music Library, Birmingham).
 R. Langley (Librarian, Royal College of Organists)
 C. Langman (Librarian, The Organ Club).
 S. Leach (Manchester).
 Dr. A. Lelli (The Italian Institute in the United Kingdom).
 J. Lewis (Organist, Wallasey Parish Church).
 Liverpool City Library, Music Department
 Liverpool City Library, Local Studies Department
 Liverpool Record Office.
 E. McNeil B.A., D.L.S., A.T.C.L., A.L.A. (Librarian & Keeper of the
 Records, The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple).
 M. MacDonald (London).
 Manchester Town Hall.
 Marlebone Library, Local History Collection.
Musical Opinion.
The Musical Times.
 E. Morley Smith (Pontyclun).
 The National Gallery.
 The National Portrait Gallery.
 Novello & Co. Ltd..
 A. E. Ormerod B.A. (York).
 E. R. Ormerod L.V.C.M. (York).
 M. Oltmann (The Church of St. Paul's-within-the-Walls, Rome).
 T. R. Padfield (The Public Record Office).
 Professor J. Paynter O.B.E., D.Phil., G.T.C.L. (Head of Music Department,
 University of York).
 Philip Martin Music Books, York.
 R. Price (Deputy Librarian, The Wellcome Institute for the History of
 Medicine).
 M. Proctor (Archivist-in-charge, Merseyside Record Office).
 I. Robertson (Segovia, Spain).
 Royal Albert Hall, London, Archives.
 Royal College of Music, Reference Library.
 Royal College of Organists, Library.
 Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society.
 Royal Philharmonic Society.
 Ricordi & Co. Ltd..
 J. Sadgrove (Assistant Editor, *The Lancet*).
 Dr. M. Sayer (Hon. Archivist, British Organ Archive).
 Schott & Co. Ltd..
 J. Smith (Archivist, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool City Library).
 D. Soria (Librarian, The British Council, Rome).
 S. F. Spira (New York, U.S.A.).
 Stainer & Bell Ltd..
 R. Stockdale (Research Assistant, the British Library, Department of
 Manuscripts).
 M. Stray (Harrogate).
 Dr. B. Tams M.B., Ch.B., M.R.C.G.P. (York).
 R. Taylor (Curator, Kodak Museum, National Museum of Photography,
 Film and Television).
 R. M. W. Taylor Ll.B. (Town Clerk and Chief Executive, City of
 Manchester).

D. E. Tebbet B.A. (Bradford).
L. M. Tebbet S.R.N, S.C.M. (York).
N. Tebbet (Batley).
Professor N. Temperley (Professor of Music, University of Illinois,
U.S.A.).
Rev. N. Thistlethwaite M.A., D.Phil. (Chaplain, Gonville and Caius College,
Cambridge).
T. Thom M.A., A.L.A. (Librarian, The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn).
Professor Ian Tracey (Organist, Liverpool Cathedral). Travis & Emery,
Music and Musical Literature.
Victoria Library, London, Archives and Local Studies Department.
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
C. Walton (Archive Department, Stainer & Bell Ltd.).
P. A. Ward Jones (Music Librarian, The Bodleian Library, Oxford).
D. J. Way (Sub Librarian, Faculty of Law, University of Liverpool).
D. Webster Mus.D., F.R.C.O.(CHM), A.D.C.M., F.T.C.L., L.R.A.M.,
A.R.C.M. (York).
The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.
D. J. Williams (Under-Librarian, Music Department, Cambridge University
Library).
J. Sinclair Willis F.R.S.A., M.I.S.O.B., A.I.M.I.T. (Henry Willis & Sons
Ltd.).
University of York, J. B. Morrell Library.
W. Young (Archivist, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London).

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout the text and the accompanying sections of the work:

Alto (A)

Bach Werke-Verzeichnis (Index to Bach's works) (BWV)

Bass (B)

British Library (BL)

Common Metre (CM)

Editor(s) (ed(s))

Köchel-Verzeichnis (Köchel Index) (K)

Manuscript(s) (MS(S))

The Monthly Musical Record (MMR)

The Musical Herald (MH)

Long Metre (LM)

Musical Journal (MJ)

Musical Opinion (MO)

The Musical Standard (MS)

The Musical Times (MT)

The Musical World (MW)

The Musical Quarterly (MQ)

No date (nd)

Number (No)

Octave (8ve)

Opus (Op)

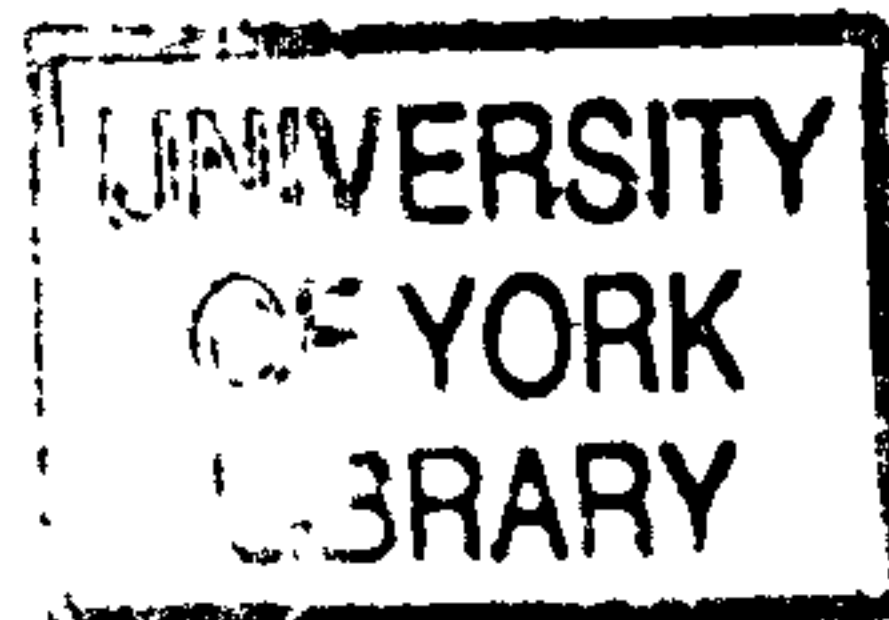
Short Metre (SM)

Soprano (S)

Tenor (T)

PART 1

FORCES AT WORK



PRELUDE

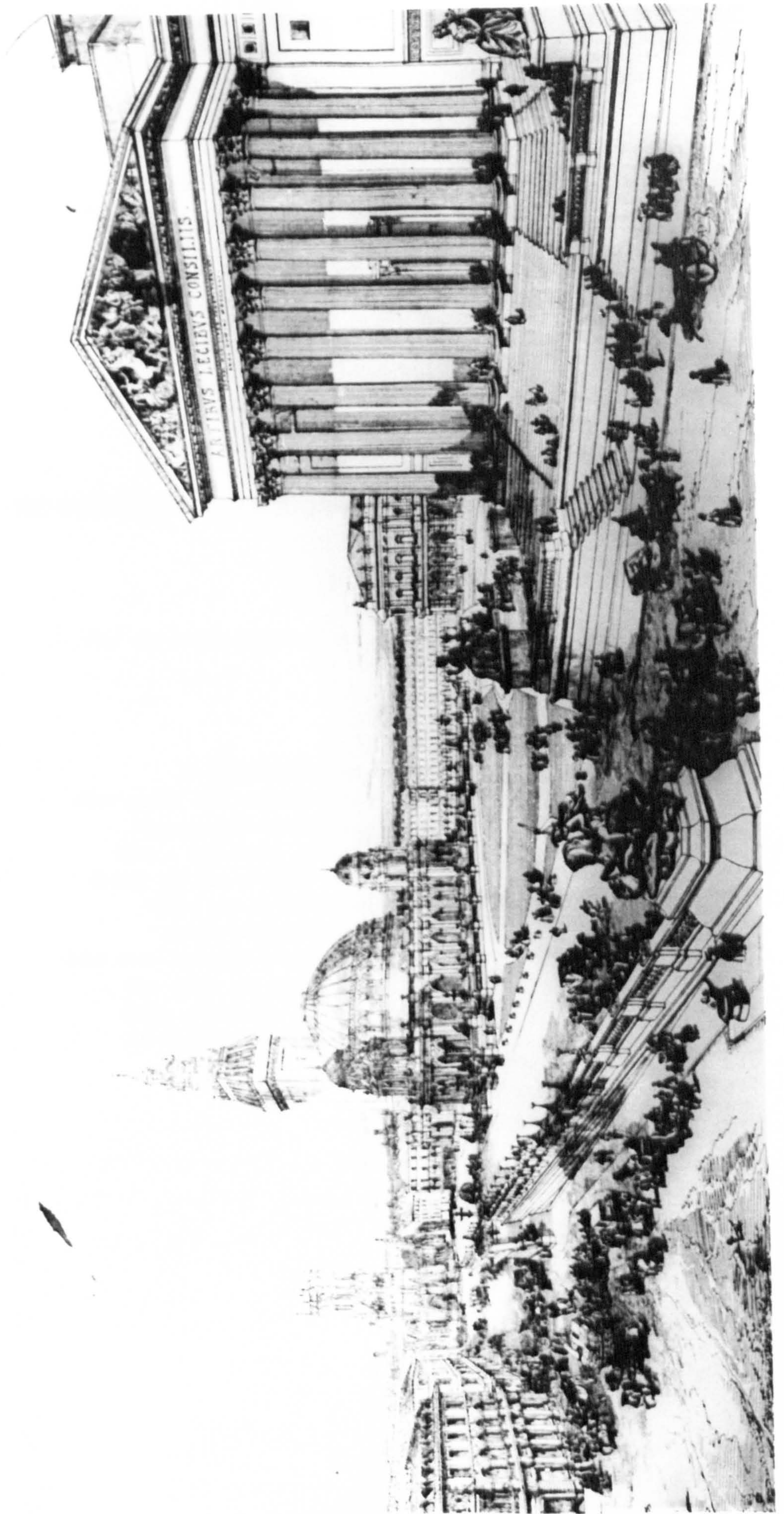
At a meeting of the Liverpool Law Courts Committee, on 8th September 1851, it was resolved that

.....the Committee meet Professor Walmisley in London on the 15th inst., and arrangements be made to hear the organs at the Great Exhibition on the next day and that Dr. Wesley be requested to meet the Committee.....

In 1827, and again in 1832, Liverpool Council was petitioned to erect a concert hall in the city. This was to provide a venue for the four-day Triennial Music Festivals, which had previously been held in St. Peter's Church, in order to raise money for charity. Objections had been voiced concerning the performance of secular music in a church, so a committee was formed, and subscriptions totalling £23,350 were collected, with the aim of building a concert hall. Harvey Lonsdale Elmes (1813-1847) was chosen to be the architect, and the foundation stone was laid in 1838. When Liverpool became an Assize Town in 1835 it became necessary to build new Law Courts. Again Elmes was successful in submitting a design. Difficulties arose over the use of the proposed new concert hall for the Music Festivals, the result of which was that the project was taken over by the Corporation and the subscriptions returned. A new building which combined both Law Courts and Concert Hall – St. George's Hall – was designed by Elmes with the foundation stone being laid in 1841.

In 1845, budgetary provision was made for an organ to be erected in the main Great Hall and for a smaller organ in the Concert Hall. The smaller organ was never built. Dr. Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876), the leading church musician of the time, was appointed as consultant. In 1846 he submitted a design for a huge three-manual instrument with a Combination Organ '...to give a selection of stops from the Choir and Swell Organs, in number from 15 to 20...' to be playable from a fourth keyboard.¹ The compass was to begin at GG, and the organ was to be tuned to unequal temperament. Gray and Davison were appointed to build the instrument, but the decision was postponed. The Law Courts Committee sought further advice from Professor Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814-1856) of Trinity College Cambridge, Vincent Novello (1781-1861), James Turle (1802-1882) and Edward Hopkins (1818-1907), the organists of Westminster Abbey and the Temple Church respectively. These musicians produced a sixteen-page critique of Wesley's design, which involved criticism of the nomenclature of the stops, the compass of the keyboard and pedals and the tuning to unequal temperament. Wesley produced a one-page reply which did not satisfy the Committee. In a second reply, Wesley agreed with many of the criticisms, but omitted any reference to the compass and tuning (Carrington 1981:10-12). In 1847 the firms of Gray and Davison, Hill, Lincoln and Bishop were invited to tender for the construction of

the instrument; but again, no final decision was taken. Eventually, in 1851, the Committee resolved to visit the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park to hear the organs exhibited there.²



1. An artist's impression of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, and its surroundings.
[Liverpool City Library]

CHAPTER 1

THE VICTORIAN CITY AND CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS

.....Our age is pre-eminently the age of great cities.....
(Robert Vaughan, 1843)

*At social Industry's command.
How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,
Hiding the face of earth for leagues - and there,
Where not an habitation stood before,
Abodes of men irregularly massed
Like trees in forests - spread through spacious tracts,
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.*
(William Wordsworth)

The transformation of England which took place between 1750 and 1850 is generally described as the Industrial Revolution. E. J. Hobsbawm (1968:13) describes this transformation in the following words:

The Industrial Revolution marks the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world recorded in written documents. For a brief period it coincided with the history of a single country, Great Britain. An entire world economy was thus built on, or rather around, Britain, and this country rose to a position of global influence and power unparalleled by any state of its relative size before or since, and is unlikely to be paralleled by any state in the foreseeable future.....

In the mid-18th century there were no other English cities which could compare with London for size, although ports like Liverpool and Bristol were expanding rapidly, based to a large extent, on the trade in slaves and colonial products such as sugar, tea and tobacco. Even at this time the British were famous for their machinery, and the steam engine in its primitive form was already in existence. Certain towns and areas were well-known for particular types of manufacturing: Birmingham for metal goods; Sheffield for cutlery; Staffordshire for pottery; and East Anglia and Yorkshire for woollens. However, most of these industries and centres of manufacturing were in a rural setting. In the 18th century it was the merchant, rather than the industrialist, who was Britain's most characteristic citizen. Britain was, at this time, the 'nation of shopkeepers'.

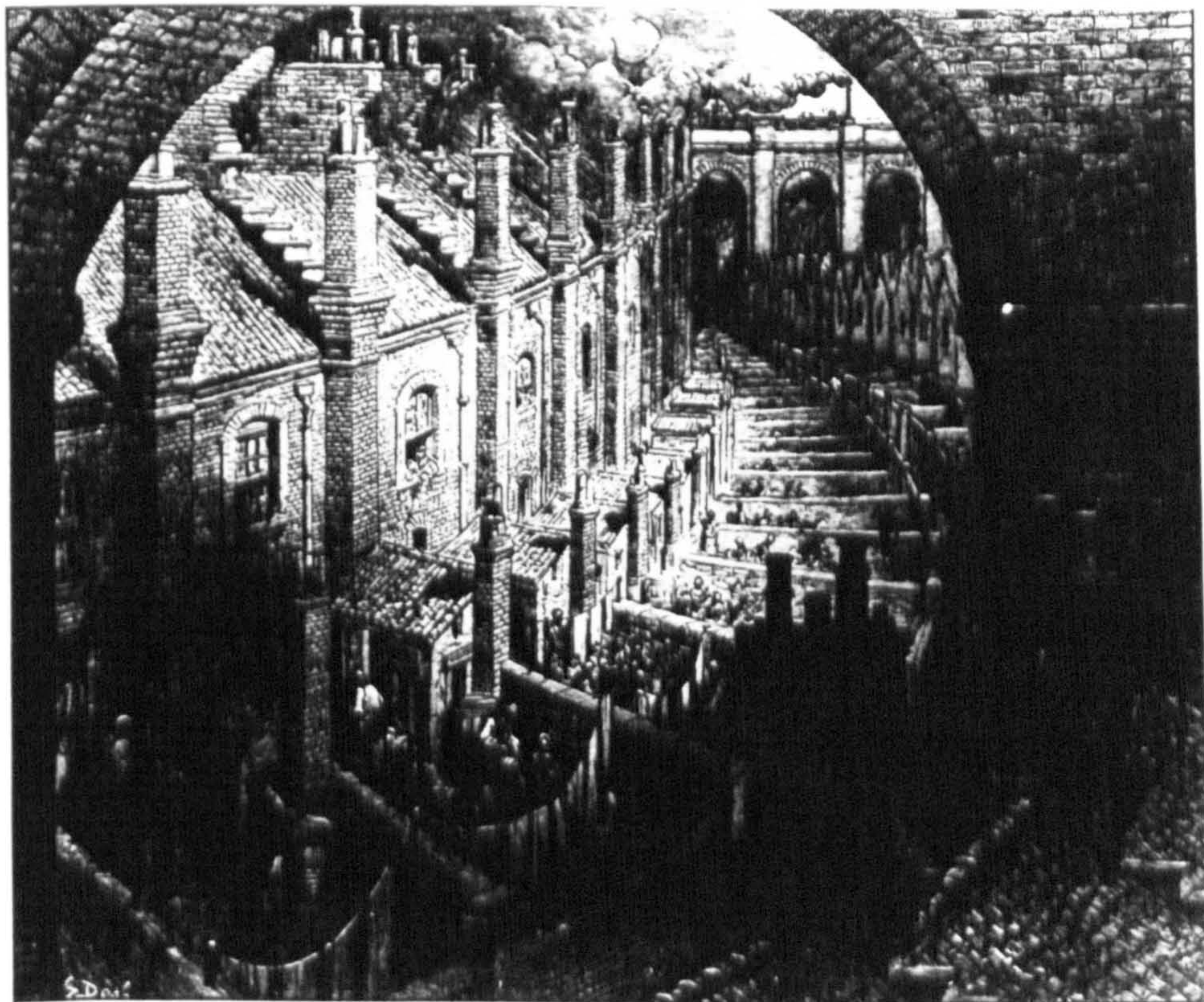
The application of steam power, initially to the cotton industry, led to the concentration of large numbers of population in the 'new' industrial areas, such as Manchester.¹ The increase in size of the industrial cities was fuelled by the development of the network of railways. Ports, such as Liverpool, benefited from the resultant increase of trade, and from increase in size. Thus the phenomenon that both fascinated and frightened the Victorians – the city – came into being.

This increase in population resulted in massive overcrowding in the cities, with all the attendant social problems:

.....Coal fires belched out smoke and soot from thousands of chimneys, polluting the atmosphere with yellow fog. Poverty, no longer a matter of small groups scattered in the

countryside but of vast masses, assumed a new dimension of horror. Epidemic diseases, such as typhoid or cholera, were difficult to control. The evils bred by hunger and despair - crime, violence, prostitution - multiplied.....(Bédarida 1970/1985:96)

The governing authorities in these cities worked throughout the reign of Queen Victoria to ameliorate the circumstances of all the citizens, by the provision of water, sewage disposal, education and hospitals. They also aimed to improve the general culture of the population by providing libraries and art galleries. Music was seen as an important element in this general culture, and concerts were given regularly in the building which came to be the embodiment of civic pride - the Town Hall.



2. Houses and Railway Viaduct. [Engraving by Doré]

[original in colour]



3. South-East view of Sheffield.

Watercolour, c.1854 by William Ibbitt. [Sheffield City Museums]

The 19th century Town Hall was usually a multi-purpose building; it concentrated under one roof what had previously been accommodated in the following types of building:

1. *Moot Hall* – A building originally connected with the organisation of towns and with local jurisdiction.
2. *Guildhall* – This type of building, medieval in origin, was modified in the 19th century, and used for municipal functions, in places such as Ling's Lynn, London and York.

Both the Moot Hall and Guildhall type of building contained a large hall suitable for meetings – a feature which formed an essential part of the 19th century Town Hall.

3. *Market Hall* – This represents one of the earliest service buildings of the municipality. The granting of a market charter was often one of the first liberties of a borough.

A combination of the Market Hall and meeting room represents a type of Town Hall similar to that at Great Bedwyn, described by William Cobbet (1830) in the following words:

.....There stood a thing out in the middle of the place, about 25 feet long and 15 wide, being a room stuck up on unhewn stone pillars about 10 feet high. It was the Town Hall.....

4. *Court House* – Another example of a pre-industrial municipal building. Legal jurisdiction over its own district was an important stage in the development of urban independence.
5. *Assembly Room* – The Assembly Room was a creation of the 18th century and is linked to the rise of the middle classes. These rooms were often used for purposes of entertainment.

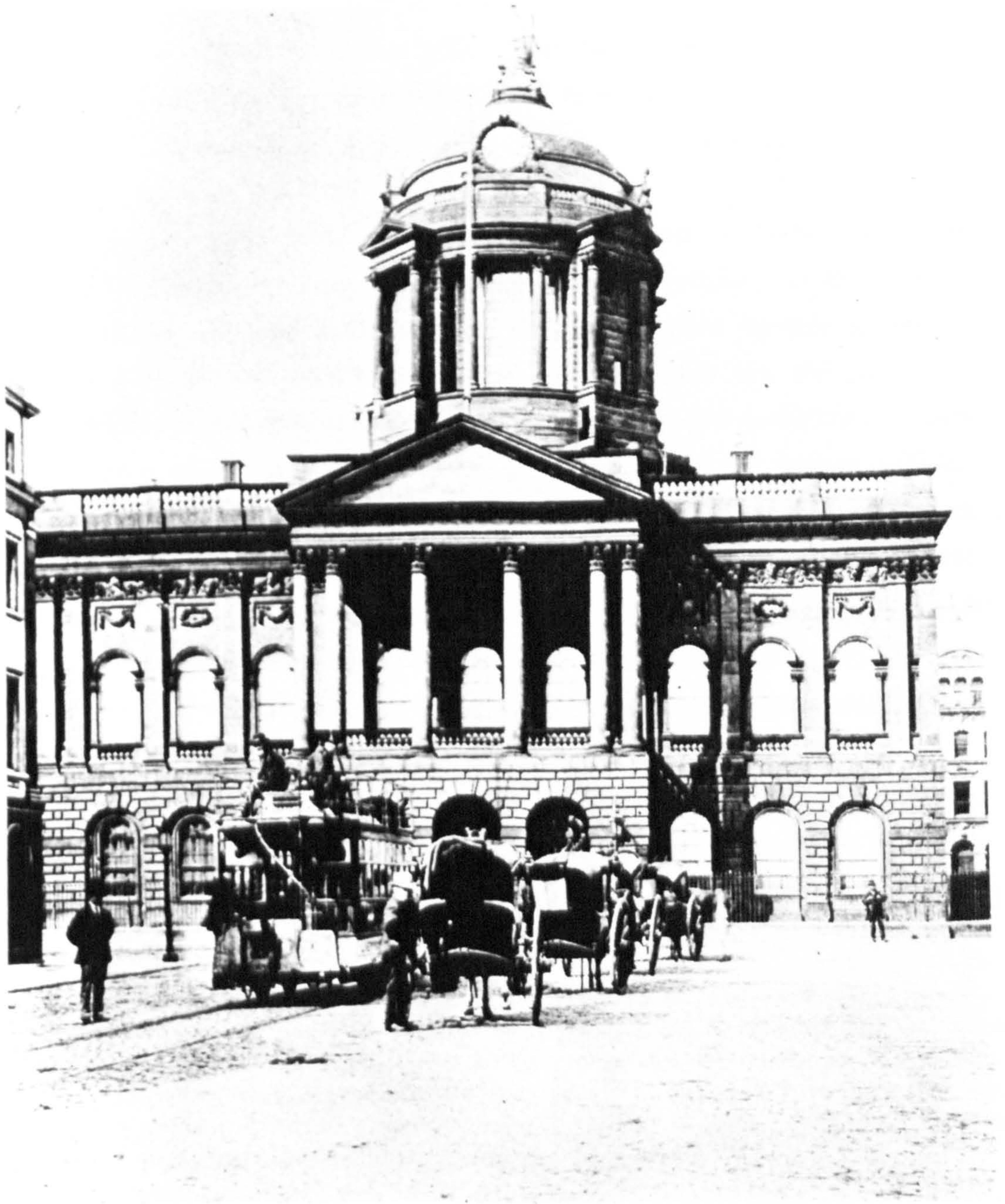
The three functions of meetings, markets and magistracy coupled with entertainment

were all catered for to a greater or lesser extent in the Town Halls of the 19th century.

The Town Hall became a regular feature of towns in the 18th century - usually situated by the market place. These halls were generally small; grand Town Halls, such as that at Liverpool (1749-1754), being rare at that time. The growth of municipal democracy and legislation, which went hand-in-hand with the spread of urbanisation, created the opportunity for the provision of new civic buildings. The concentration of population in the cities needed detailed management, and thus created a need for larger corporate buildings. A good example of how the demand for larger civic buildings grew during the 19th and 20th centuries can be seen from the developments in the city of Birmingham.

In the 1830's a single building in classical style - Birmingham Town Hall - consisting of a concert hall with a committee room in the basement was considered adequate. In the 1870's more office space was needed, which resulted in the building of a Council House. In 1884 this was expanded to cover a whole block, with more offices around a courtyard and incorporating the Art Gallery. Further large extensions were planned in 1899 and completed in 1919. This was followed by a more grandiose civic centre scheme in the 1920's, part of which was never built, and the 1960's saw even more extensive development.

The *Municipal Reform Act* of 1835 established 178 Municipal Corporations, governed by an elected Council, with the right to levy rates and publish accounts. These new Municipal Boroughs had legal jurisdiction, but the provision of services was in the hands of various boards of Commissioners. Areas of responsibility which were only slowly absorbed by the Municipal Councils. That there was a need for a public hall in towns and cities at this time can be assumed from the fact that a number of Commissioners erected buildings of this type. The first Town Hall at Manchester (c1819-1845) was built by Commissioners and financed by public subscription. In other towns and cities a public company was set up to provide a hall. Many of these halls became Town Halls, when either the Commissioners were absorbed, or the public company bought out, by the Councils.



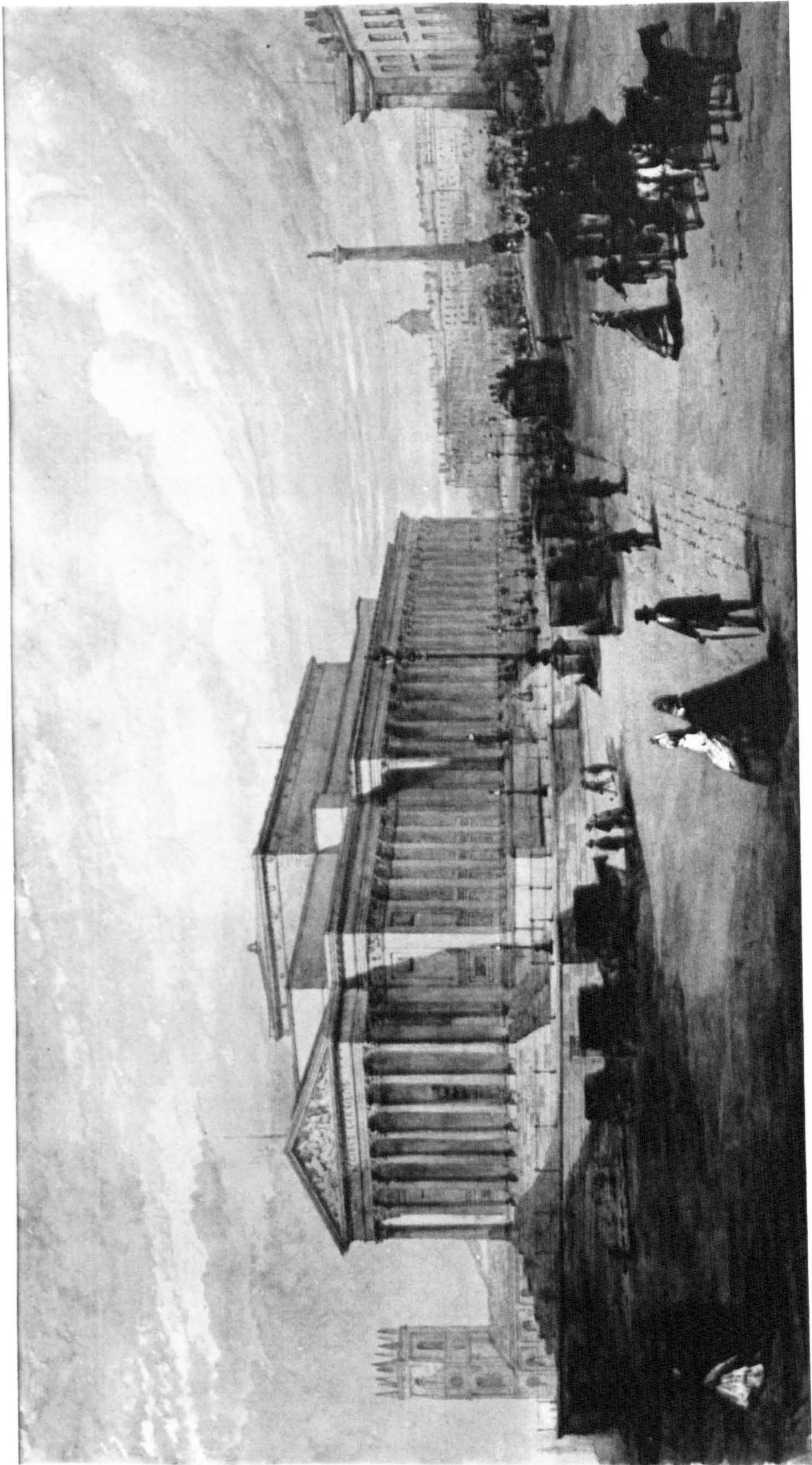
4. *Liverpool Town Hall [1754], designed by the elder John Wood of Bath in 1749 and destroyed by fire in 1795. James Wyatt reconstructed the building and added the Corinthian portico.*

These new Town Halls reveal a widespread desire for a civic centre which would be a symbol and an expression of the new status of the towns and cities after the *Municipal Reform Act*. St. George's Hall at Liverpool represents a peak in the field of civic patronage, and although it is not the actual Town Hall of Liverpool, it fulfills two of the functions of such a hall. This magnificent neo-classical building represents the summit of 19th century municipal building.

The concert rooms, which were an essential feature of these new Town Halls generally contained an organ. Originally thought necessary as an adjunct to the great choral festivals held in these halls, the organs often became popular concert instruments in their own right. The Town Councils saw the value of music as a vehicle for the improvement and education of the general populace. Many musicians regarded music as having a moral purpose, as did Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), who wrote '...Music can suggest no improper thought, and herein may be claimed its superiority over painting and sculpture...' (Mackerness 1964:189). In a lecture given at the London Mechanics' Institute, William Edward Hickson (1803-1870), a pioneer of music education, extolled the moral influence of music in the following words '...it has a tendency to wean the mind from vicious and sensual indulgences; and, if properly directed, it has a tendency to incline the heart to kindly feelings, and just and generous emotions...' (quoted in *Central Society of Education, First Publication* 1837:307). When an organ was installed in the Glasgow City Hall, the following appeared in the *Musical World* (1853, xxxi:691):

.....Music in itself cannot do anything to elevate the people any more than it can demoralise them. In itself, it is neither good nor bad, but by association, it can be made to subserve the cause of truth, it may be made to awaken the imagination - to inspire great and heroic deeds - to advance the cause of virtue and morality, and in this way, we hope the Organ will become a powerful agent in helping to rescue members of the debased and vile from their habits of wretchedness and immorality.....

The Town Hall concert organ played a vital rôle in Victorian music-making. The organs themselves were seen as civic status-symbols, and the evolution of the instrument in the period between 1830 and 1851/ reveals a fascinating interaction of current musical and technological trends.



5. 'St. George's Hall and Lime Street [Liverpool]
Watercolour by R. H. Bantham, 1862 [Walker Art Gallery]

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 19th CENTURY TOWN HALL ORGAN

*...we rejoice that this organ [in Glasgow City Hall] may be the means...
of aiding the cause of social improvement...*

(Musical World 1853, xxxi:691)

At the beginning of the 19th century the average English organ was an instrument of small dimensions when compared with many instruments on the continent of Europe. Even the organs in large churches and cathedrals were of modest size, like the instrument built for Carlisle Cathedral by John Avery (completed after his death by Thomas Elliot) c1806. The specification was:

FULL ORGAN	CHOIR ORGAN	SWELL ORGAN
Open Diapason	Stop Diapason	Open Diapason
Stop Diapason	Principal	Stop Diapason
Principal	Flute (all through)	Principal
Twelfth	Dulciana - to be communicated	Cornet
Fifteenth	to bass of Stop Diapason	Hautboy (all through)
3-rank Sesquialtera		
Trumpet		
3-rank Cornet to middle C		
(the first five stops all through)		

The compass of the Full [Great] and Choir was GG to D in alt., and that of the Swell, Gamut G to D in alt.. It would appear that this instrument had no pedal pipes until 1834, although it may have been possible to couple the main keyboard to the pedals on the original instrument.

By 1860, organs of immense size, with up to a hundred stops (some of them on heavy pressure of wind), four keyboards, full keyboard and pedal compass, and with many mechanical devices for controlling the stops, were being built for the new Town Halls in the industrial cities of the Midlands and North. The organ was also finding a new popularity as a solo instrument among both music-lovers and the general public. The virtuoso civic organists played weekly to audiences which were often numbered in thousands. This situation came about as a result of a combination of the following trends.

The Organ as a Secular Instrument

The great advances in organ development in the first half of the 19th century did not take place in the instruments provided for the Established Church. As late as 1847 the organ in Gloucester Cathedral, as rebuilt by the young Henry Willis, had the following specification:

GREAT ORGAN
(CCC to F 66 notes)

Open Diapason
Open Diapason
Stopped Diapason
Clarabella
Principal
Twelfth
Fifteenth
Sesquialtera IV
Mixture II
Trumpet
Clarion
Clarion

PEDAL ORGAN
(CCC to F 30 notes)
Pedal Pipes

SWELL ORGAN
(CC to F 54 notes)

Open Diapason
Open Diapason
Stopped Diapason
Dulciana
Principal
Flute
Fifteenth
Sesquialtera
Trumpet
Hautboy
Cremona

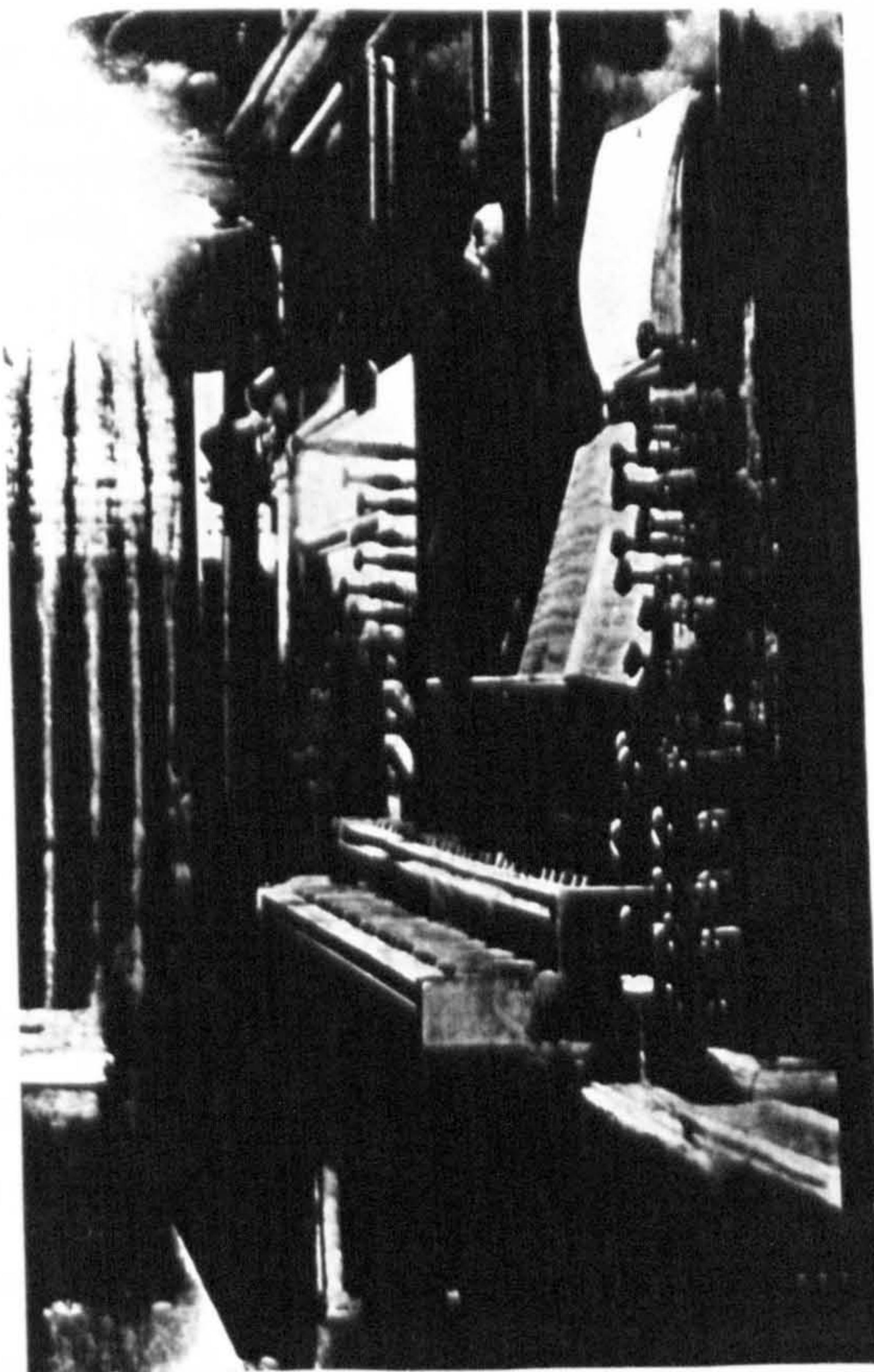
COUPLERS

Swell to Great
Choir to Great
Swell to Choir
Pedals to Great
Pedals to Choir
Pedals to Swell

CHOIR ORGAN
(GG to F 58 notes)

Dulciana
Stopped Diapason
Principal
Flute (metal)
Fifteenth

(Sumner 1955:15)



6. *The console of the organ in Gloucester Cathedral as it was after the rebuild by Henry Willis in 1847.*

The instrument remained in this state until 1886, and was thus the organ used by S. S. Wesley and C. H. Lloyd throughout their successive tenures as organist. The advances in organ building in the 19th century were made generally in the instruments built for the large non-conformist chapels (such as Great George Street Chapel, Liverpool and Brunswick Chapel, Leeds), and more importantly in the organs for the new Town Halls, where the instruments were intended for secular rather than religious use.

Although the organ has been associated with Christian worship for the last thousand years, it is an instrument of great antiquity, and its original use was probably for secular purposes. It is possible that the secularisation of the organ in England occurred at the time of the Commonwealth when Cromwell ordered that they should be removed from the churches. Many of these instruments were purchased by innkeepers for the entertainment of their customers. These 'Musick Houses' seem to have been very popular, although they did not meet with the approval of one French traveller, whose work was translated and published by John Evelyn (1620-1706) in 1659:

.....That nothing may be wanting to the height of luxury and impiety of this abomination, they have translated their organs out of their Churches to set them up in taverns, chaunting their dithyrambics and bestial bacchanalias to the tune of those instruments which were wont to assist them in the celebration of God's praises..... (Gilfillan 1962:145)

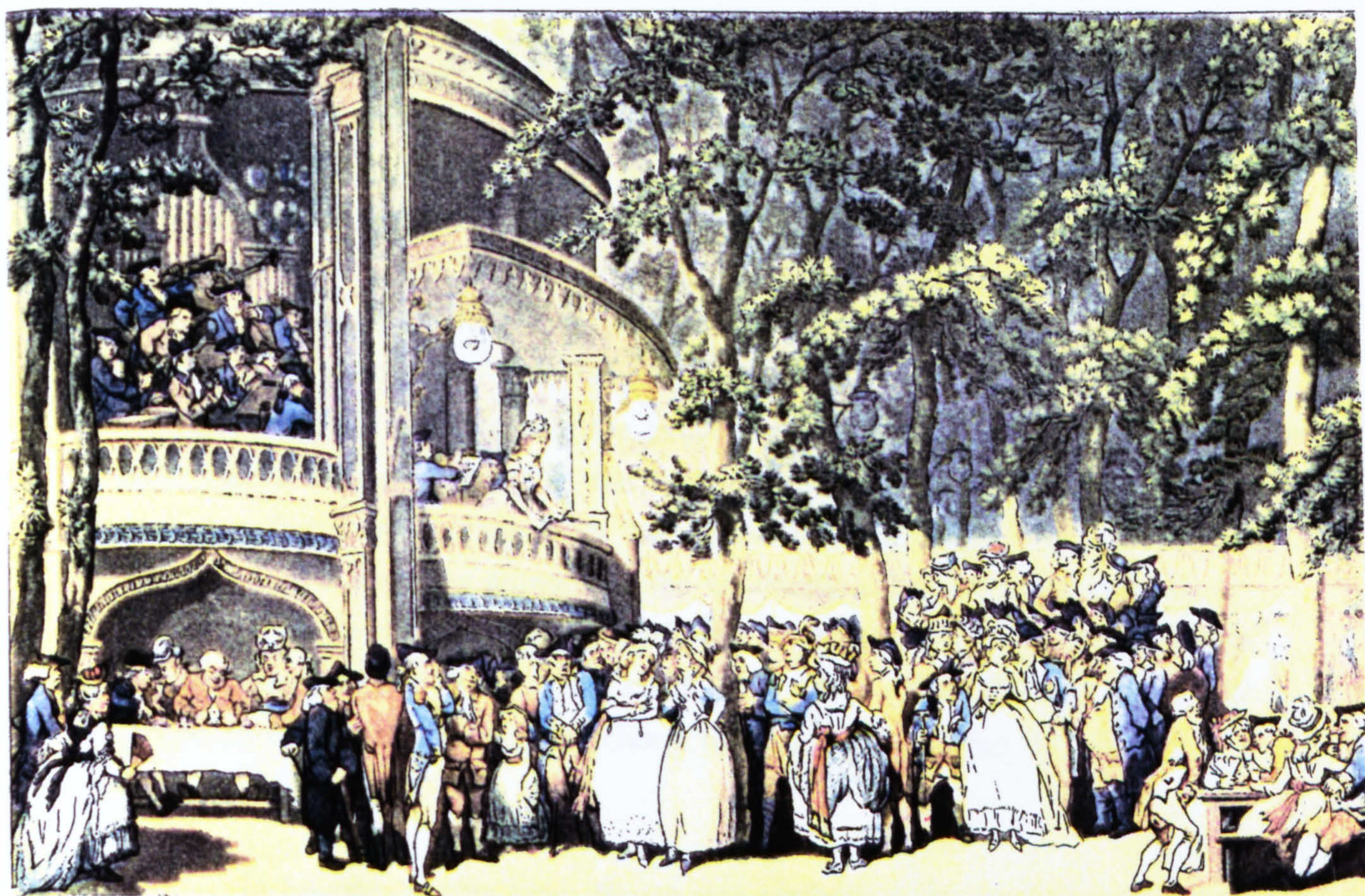
These instruments were often retained after the Restoration. Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) recorded in his diary in 1663 '...To the musique house, where we had paltry musique till the master organist came...and he did give me a fine voluntary, and so home by water...' (Gilfillan 1962:145).

In the 18th century, concerts and concert halls became common in London. An organ was installed in the Covent Garden Opera House in 1733, and in 1768 one was installed in the Drury Lane Theatre. The London pleasure gardens were also used for musical purposes, organs being installed in Vauxhall Gardens (1730) and Ranelagh Gardens, Chelsea (1746). These instruments became major features of the

musical activities in the gardens. At Vauxhall Gardens, many organ concertos, including those by James Hook (1746–1827), were performed.

The opening years of the 19th century saw a lull in the building of organs for secular purposes. Apart from the organ built by Elliot for the Hanover Square Rooms, Flight's work at Her Majesty's Theatre, the Covent Garden Opera House, the Apollonicon and the Bath Concert Hall (1824, in partnership with Robson), there appears to have been little progress until William Hill's work at Birmingham Town Hall in 1834.

[original in colour]



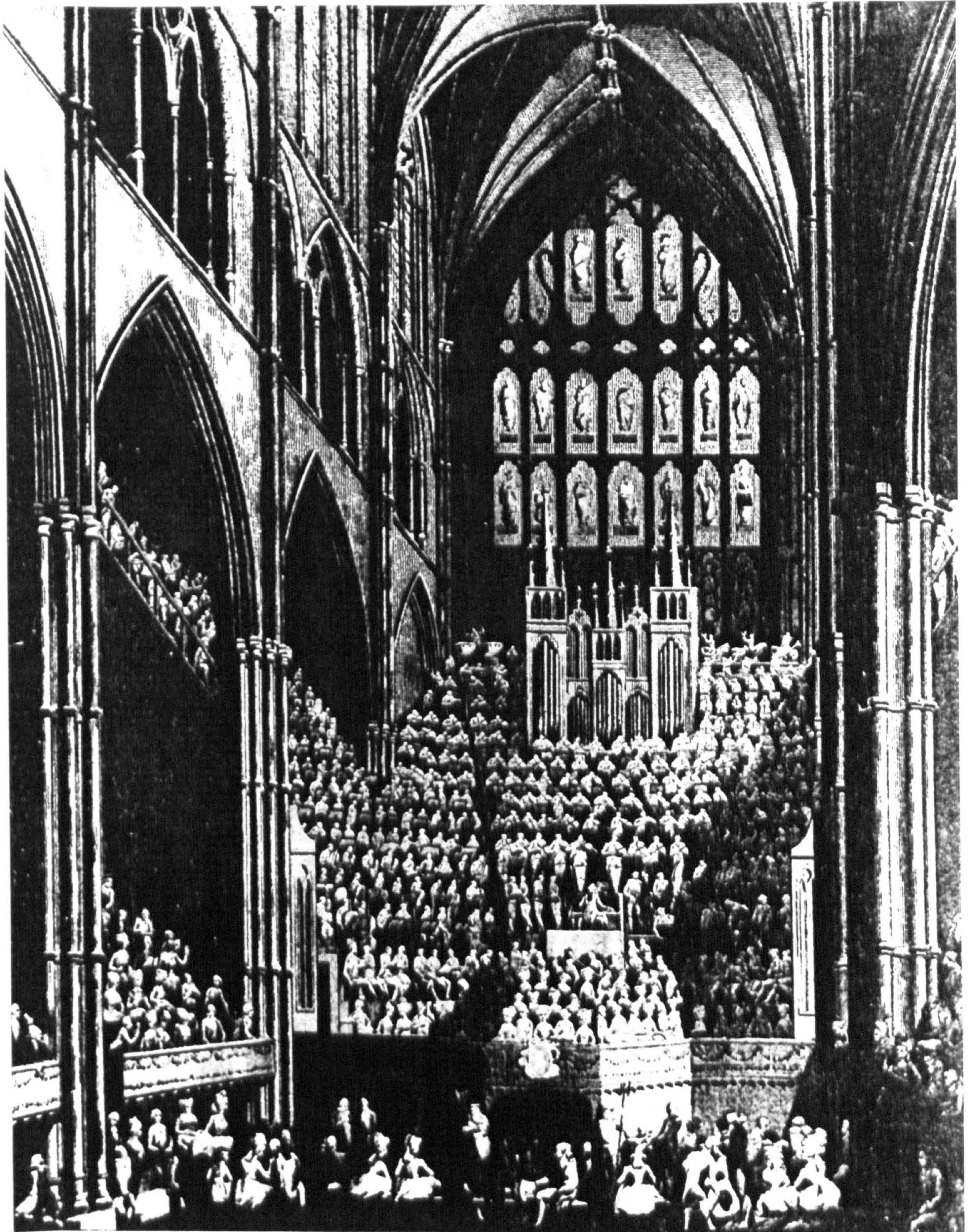
7. Vauxhall Gardens.

The Spectacular in Music-making

The 19th century concert organs were large instruments, capable of producing grand and varied effects. In this respect they were reflecting a general musical trend. The late 18th century saw the development of choral music festivals which were dominated by oratorio - originally those by Handel (1685-1759), and later those by Haydn (1732-1809) and Mendelssohn (1809-1847). The choral and instrumental forces used at these festivals were large, and a general liking for massive musical effects developed. Perhaps the single most important event in this development was the Commemoration of Handel, held in Westminster Abbey in 1784. Charles Burney (1726-1814) wrote that '...In order to render the band as powerful and complete as possible, it was determined to employ every species of instrument that was capable of producing grand effects in a great orchestra and spacious building...' (Nettel 1946:88).

To achieve this, the *Concert of Antient Music* gathered a total of 525 musicians: 59 sopranos, 48 altos, 83 tenors, 84 basses, 48 first violins, 47 second violins, 26 violas, 21 violoncellos, 15 double basses, 6 flutes, 26 oboes, 26 bassoons, 1 double bassoon, 12 trumpets, 12 horns, 6 trombones, kettle-drums, tower drums and organ. The performance was directed from the organ, specially built for the occasion by Samuel Green, and played by means of a 'long movement', which enabled the keyboards to be placed at some distance in front of, and below, the pipes. It can be seen from the proportions of the orchestra that the principles of orchestral balance common in the first half of the 18th century were being applied. There are approximately two oboes to seven violins, but only six flutes to 26 oboes. The bassoons outnumber the violoncellos, and even with the string basses and organ their tone must have been prominent; especially as the double bassoon was placed in front of the conductor. It is reasonable to assume that similar forces were used at other choral festivals up and down the country.

In Europe, at this time, Haydn was perfecting new methods of scoring for the orchestra, which was losing its late 18th century identity as new orchestral effects were discovered. This was the dawn of the *Romantic Age* and 'expression'



8. A view of the orchestra and singers in Westminster Abbey at the Commemoration of Handel in 1784.

was now an important factor. The French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) was in the forefront of new approaches to composition and orchestration, as exemplified in his *Symphonie Fantastique* Op.14, first performed in 1830. The technology of instrument-making was developing fast, with the result that the natural idiosyncracies of instruments, intelligently made use of by composers in the past, were being ironed out. Gargantuan new orchestral effects were envisaged, Berlioz having as his ideal an orchestra of 465 players, to which could also be added a large chorus¹. He described the potential of such an orchestra as '...a million combinations possible...in richness of harmony, variety of sounds, multitude of contrasts, comparable to nothing yet achieved in any art...' (Dorian 1942:245). Berlioz never achieved such colossal forces, but for the performance of his *Requiem*, at the funeral of General Damremont in the Dome des Invalides, in 1837, the orchestra was augmented by four extra brass bands; there were sixteen timpanists.



9. The 'fantastique' Berlioz. A caricature by Carjat.

In the presentation and performance of music in a manner which excited the attention of the general public, another Frenchman, Louis Jullien (1812-1860), had a profound influence during the first half of the 19th century. In the 1840's and 1850's he conducted 'Promenade Concerts' in both London and the Provinces. Jullien was one of the first conductors who, along with Philippe Musard (1793-1859) in Paris and Johann Strauss (1804-1849) in Vienna, was a 'box-office draw'. It was as much Jullien's personality, as the music performed and the lavish presentation, which attracted audiences to his concerts. During his first season, in 1840, the *Musical World* drew attention to the fountains, shrubs and flowers that adorned the concert hall. Jullien conducted some spectacular ensembles, and in 1845, gave the following concert at the Surrey Zoological Gardens:

.....A covered platform, housing 300 musicians, was erected opposite the giraffe house, and there was an audience of 1,200. The *Post-horn Galop*, Jullien's *English Quadrilles* (complete with five bands in the finale) and the *Bohemian Polka* scored a sensational effect. The *Illustrated London News* confirms that Bellini's *Suona le Trombe* from his opera *I Puritani* was performed by an amazing battery of 20 cornets, 20 trumpets, 20 trombones, 20 ophicleids, and 20 serpents - a grand total of 100 instruments. The proceedings were wound up with *God save the Queen*, in which the entire company took part, each bar being punctuated by cannon shots..... (Orga 1974:26)

Jullien also aimed, as did the civic concert organists of the next generation, at bringing the classical repertoire to a wider, less discriminating audience. He conducted some of Beethoven's symphonies, although he was not above 'improving' on Beethoven's scoring. In the 'storm' movement of the sixth symphony he added the percussive sound of dried peas rattled in a tin box to imitate the sound of hailstones, and after a performance of the fifth symphony, one critic asked him to '...explain where he found in the score...the parts for four ophicleides and a saxophone, besides those of his favourite regiment of side drums...' (Orga 1974:28) The following is the programme given by Jullien on the 30th March 1848, at the Theatre Royal, Bradford:

Overture: <i>Zampa</i>	HÉROLD
Quadrille: <i>The Standard Bearer</i>	JULLIEN
Symphony: The Allegro from the Symphony in F	BEETHOVEN
Grand Scene from <i>Ernani</i>	VERDI
Valse: <i>Ravenswood</i>	JULLIEN
Aria: <i>Non più andrai</i>	MOZART
Sacred Music from <i>Elijah</i>	MENDELSSOHN
Romanza: <i>Dulcet Music</i>	BALFE
Quadrille: <i>The Swiss</i>	JULLIEN

[original in colour]



10. *Jullien conducting. Gouache by Alfred Edward Chalon, 1841.*

Jullien's repertoire, and his love of spectacular effects, proved very popular with audiences. His method of presenting serious music in a manner which the general public found palatable – by sandwiching such items between pieces in more popular styles – was one adopted later by civic concert organists.

The development of the Town Hall concert organ parallels, in many respects, the new approach of composers towards orchestral effects, and the technological improvements in orchestral instruments.

Early designs for Town Hall organs, such as William Hill's for Birmingham and S. S. Wesley's for Liverpool, applied the same mistaken ideas to organ design that the organisers of the Handel Commemoration had applied to the orchestra on that occasion. With the intention of increasing the volume, they had merely multiplied Handel's original number of instruments, keeping roughly the same proportions between the instrumental groups. The early Town Hall organs (and some other organs at the same period) were, in reality, the 18th century English organ with the ranks duplicated, in the hope that this would increase the power of the instrument. This mistake was eventually realised:

.....the erroneous notion was still entertained that in the building of a large organ, the only means of gaining an accession of power was by increasing the number of stops of the same calibre; for example, in the specification of the York Cathedral organ, built after the fire of 1829, there were in the great organ, six stops of what would be understood as 8 foot pitch, six of 4 feet, two of 3 feet, two of 2 feet, four mixtures, and four 8 foot trumpets! And it should be understood that almost all these duplicates were, both in name and quality of tone, identical.

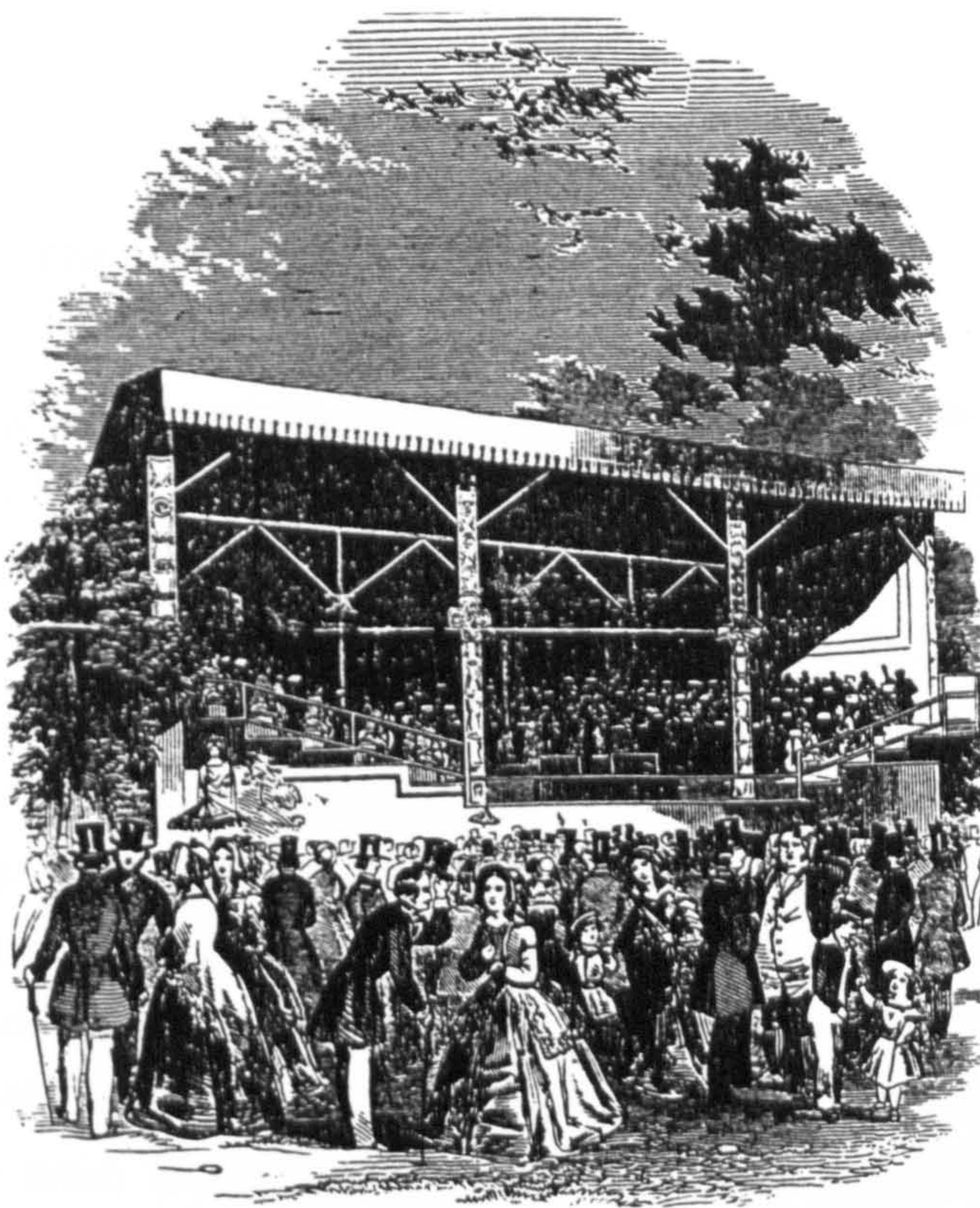
This false principle, fortunately, was followed in but a few instances; for the true system of natural harmonics was soon recognised and adopted; and a symmetrical tonal column produced by which the power and (still more) the variety of the instrument were greatly increased..... (MT Jan.1869:631&632)

Just as composers realised that the way to make effective use of the resources of a large orchestra was not to follow 18th century practice and merely add more instruments, organbuilders, as the writer of the above article implies, learnt that the creating of proper choruses, and not duplication of ranks, was the way to increase the power of the instrument.

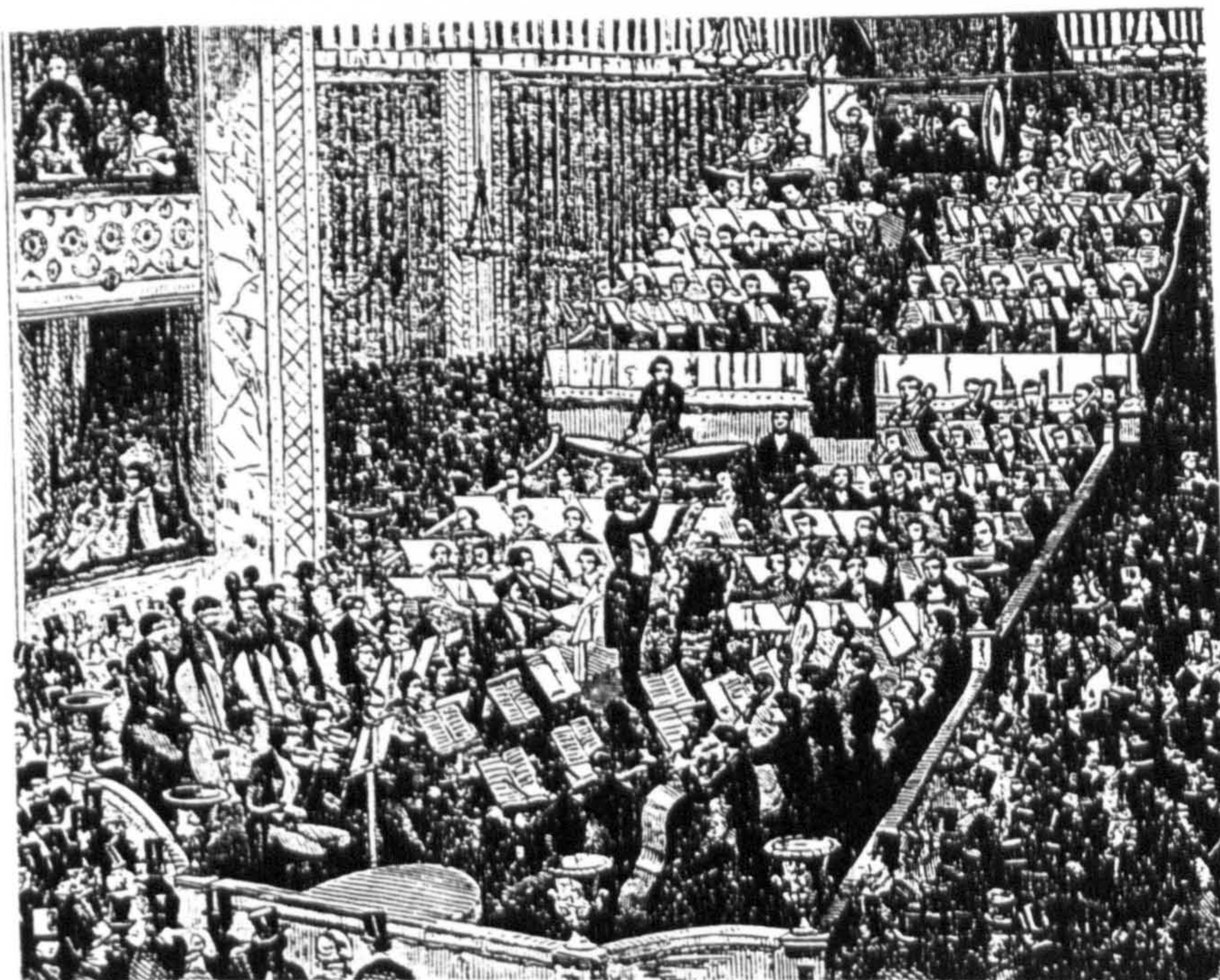
The orchestral ideas of Berlioz and Jullien also had an influence on organ design. For his concerts, Jullien hired virtuoso solo performers such as the clarinetist Lazarus and the ophicleide player Prospère. The latter made a feature of playing *Rule Britannia* '...sent forth from his leviathan instrument with a majesty and grace that no single one ever before equalled...' (Carse 1951:46). The new concert organs had stops which imitated the orchestral woodwind and brass instruments for the same purpose - for solo use. Prospère, and Jullien's other brass players, such as Koenig (cornet-à-pistons) and Vivier (French horn) made a great impression upon audiences, and their playing may well have provided the incentive for the development of heavy-pressure reed-tone on the organ. William Hill (1789-1870) was the first builder to develop this sonority, the 'Grand Ophicleide' stop on his organ for Birmingham Town Hall (voiced on 15 inch wind-pressure) being described as being as '...near to the effect of a brass band as anything we have ever heard...' (MJ Jan.1840:59)



*11. Koenig, cornet-à-piston soloist
at Jullien's concerts.*



12. *Jullien's orchestra at the Surrey Gardens, 1845.*



'13. *The British Army Quadrilles', Covent Garden, 1846.*

The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach

An interesting manifestation of cultural sympathy between England and Germany at the beginning of the 19th century was the introduction of J. S. Bach's music. His organ music was practically unknown in this country at the beginning of the century (Williams 1963:140), but began to be published in 1799. It is possible that continental editions were also available at this time. In 1838 the *Musical World* (vol.viii [N.S. vol.i]:260ff) published a review of volumes of the organ works published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Haslinger and Riedels. Manuscript copies were also in circulation, Samuel Wesley (1766-1837) having on loan (1816) '...six curious and grand Preludes and Fugues, with an additional base [sic] line entirely for the pedals...' (Edwards, MT Oct.1896:657). Because of the inadequate state of the English organ at this time, many pieces of genuine organ music by Bach were published in arrangement. For instance, in 1836, Coventry & Hollier published:

*John Sebastian Bach's GRAND STUDIES for the Organ
Consisting of Preludes, Fugues, Toccatas, and Fantasias.
Never Before Published in this Country.*

*These studies may be played on the Piano Forte by one or two performers,
A separate Part for the Double Bass or Violoncello
Arranged from the Pedale by Signor Dragonetti is added to this Edition.*

Performances of Bach's music were infrequent at this time, and were often eccentric. In 1812, for example, the 'St. Anne' Prelude was performed in an arrangement for orchestra, with solo passages for organ duet by Vincent Novello, with Samuel Wesley and Novello playing the organ (Edwards, MT Oct.1896:655). In 1828 S. S. Wesley performed the Preludes in B minor and E minor at Christ Church, Newgate Street (MW vol.ix [N.S. vol.ii] 1838:208). More remarkable was the programme given by Miss. Elizabeth Stirling (1819-1895) in August 1837, at St. Katherine's Church, Regent's Park:

Trio in G for two rows of keys and pedal, on the chorale *Allein Gott in der hoh* from the *Exercises pour le clavecin*.
Prelude in E flat from the *Exercises*.
Trio in G for two rows of keys and pedal, from the *Exercises*, on the chorale *Dies sind die Heiligen*.
Prelude and Fugue in C major, No.3 of the first set of pedal fugues.
Trio in E minor, from the *Exercises*, on the chorale *Vater unser imm [sic] himmel-reich*
Prelude and Fugue in E minor, No.6 of the first set.
Canonic variations on the Christmas hymn *Vom himmel hoch*.
Prelude and Fugue in A minor, No.1 of the first set.

Trio in D minor, from the *Exercises*, on the chorale *Jesus Christus unser Heiland*.
Prelude and Fugue in C minor, No.4 of the first set.
(Thistlethwaite 1990:507)

Against this backdrop, the public performances of Bach's organ works given by Mendelssohn (1809–1847) must have made an enormous impression. He played privately at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1832, when Thomas Attwood (1765–1838) and Vincent Novello were among those present. Between 1837 and 1842 Mendelssohn performed Bach's music publicly in England on four occasions, and possibly on three other. As the *Musical World* (vol.viii [N.S. vol.i] 1838:101) put it – '...Mendelssohn introduced Bach to the English, as an organ composer...'. Mendelssohn was a musician nurtured in the European tradition of organ-playing, which retained some of the disciplines and conventions of Bach's own day (Thistlethwaite 1983:43). His influence was two-fold: firstly, he showed English organists how to play Bach's music, and secondly, he gave English audiences a new sensation – that of contrapuntal music with an independent pedal line. The requirements of Bach's organ music had a profound effect on English organ design, which took a number of different forms.

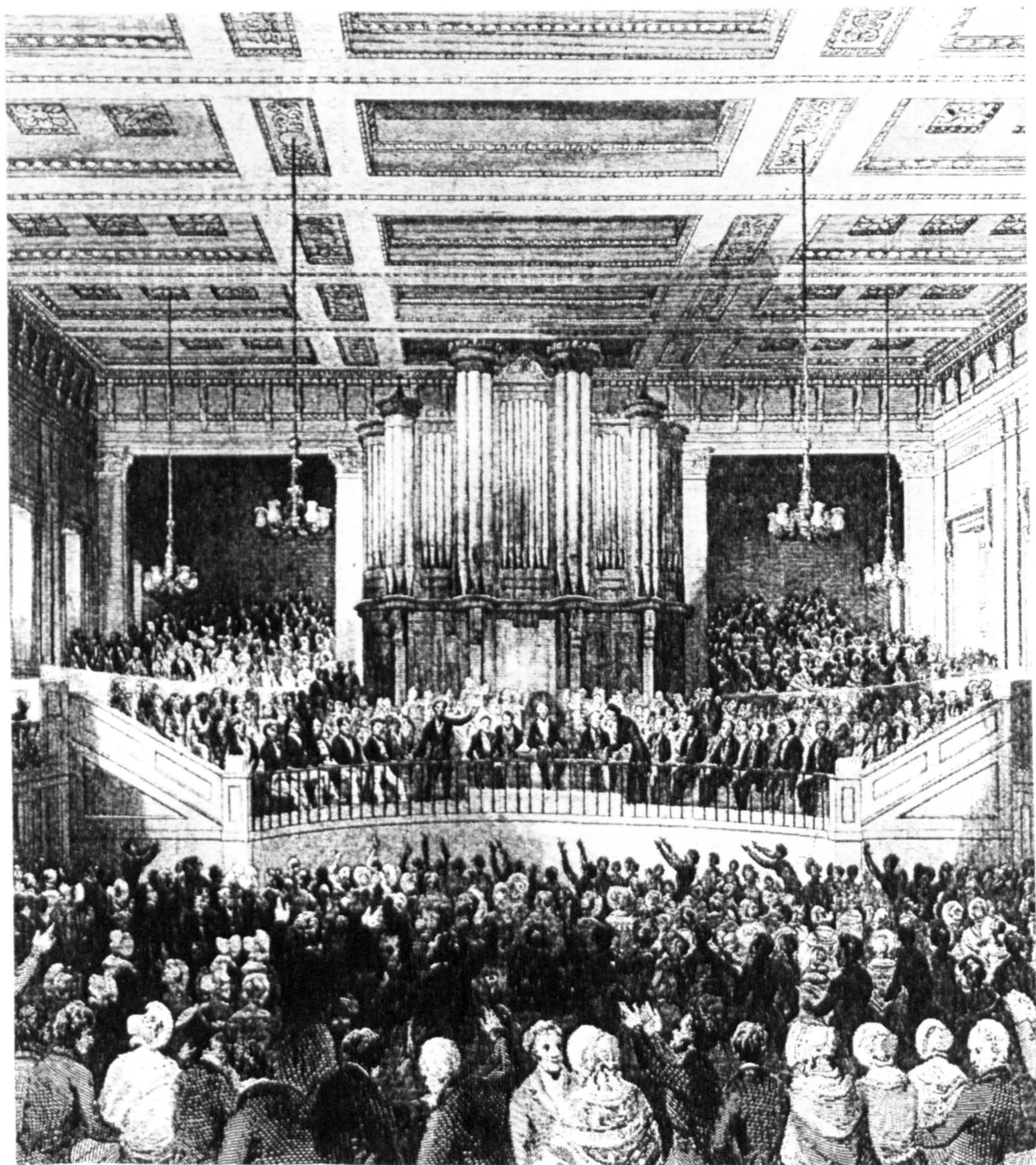
(a) Compass

At the beginning of the 19th century English organs had a compass which began with the note G. The compass of the keyboards and pedals for the instrument, built by J. C. Bishop for St. James', Bermondsey, as late as 1829, was:

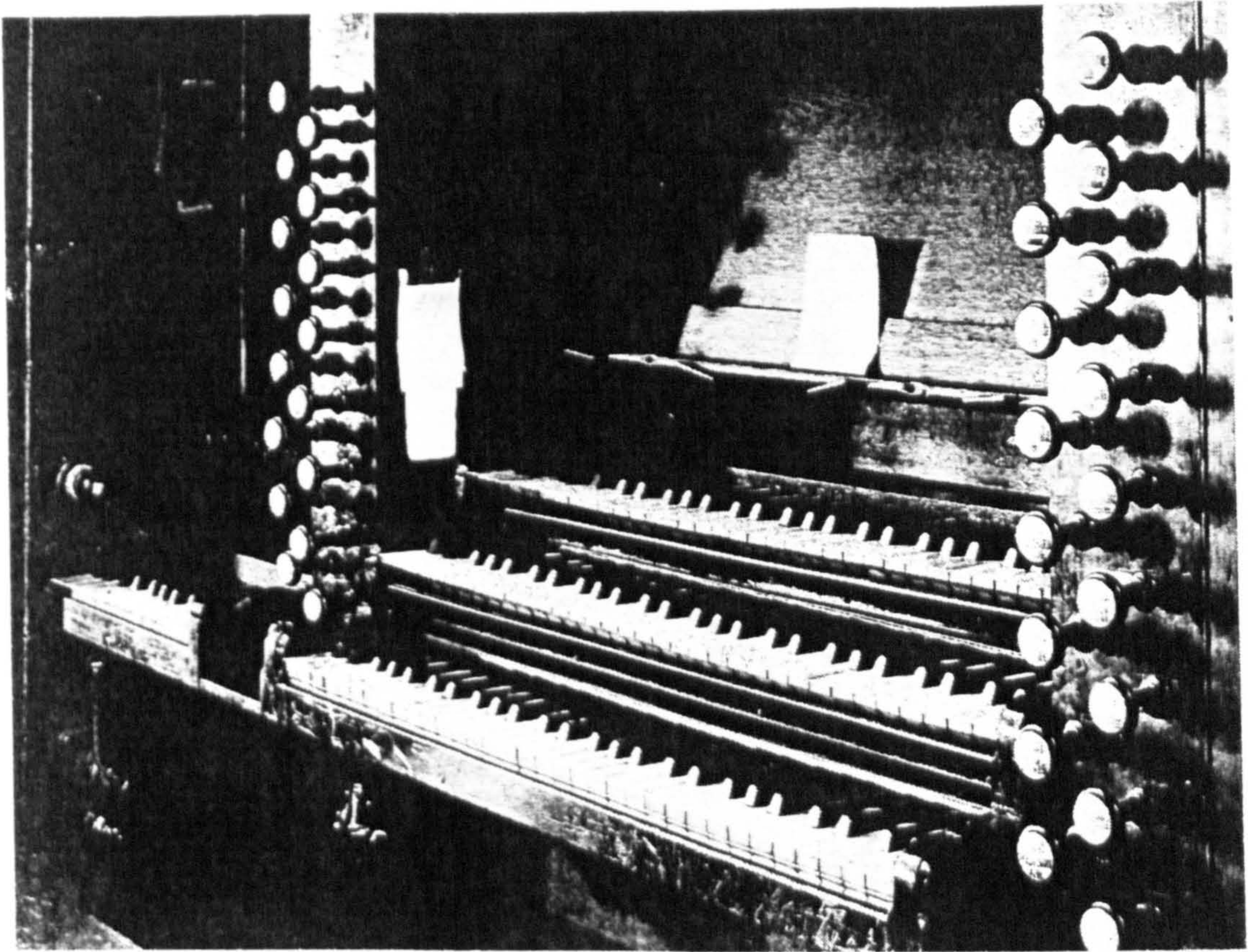
GREAT	GG - f ³
SWELL	G - f ³ *
CHOIR	GG - f ³
PEDAL	GG - g

* The Swell keyboard commenced at GG, but the lowest octave was permanently coupled to the Choir (Thistlethwaite 1983:40)

This compass was unsuitable for the performance of Bach's organ music.



14. Exeter Hall, London, showing the 1839 Organ by Joseph Walker, upon which Mendelssohn played in 1842.



15. *The console of the organ at St. James, Bermondsey (1829). On the left can be seen the small keyboard from which the pedal pipes can also be played. [Photograph: Andrew Freeman c1900]*

Henry John Gauntlett (1805–1876), remembered today as the composer of many fine hymn tunes, was a keen advocate of the C compass for both the keyboards and pedals of an organ. Gauntlett had been strongly influenced by Mendelssohn, and had been chosen to play the organ in the first performance of the composer's oratorio *Elijah* at Birmingham. Despite strong advocacy on the part of Gauntlett, such ideas took time to be absorbed, and as late as 1855, S. S. Wesley was still able to insist on a GG manual compass for the organ at St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

(b) Pedals

At the beginning of the 19th century few English organs had pedals, and those that did may only have had pull-downs, permanently coupled to the main keyboard. Pedal pipes had begun to appear in the second half of the 18th century, the first probably being those on the organ at Westminster Abbey (1788), consisting of a set of lightly-blown wooden pipes. These would have been designed to provide a deep-toned bass, and used mainly for a final dominant and tonic. The GG compass of such pedal Section rendered them unsuitable for the performance of Bach's music. Even when a CC pedal board was provided, as at Birmingham Town Hall (1834), the stops were generally unable to supply the tonal quality necessary to sustain an independent pedal line. The Birmingham organ had only three pedal stops (two of 32 ft., and one of 16 ft. pitch), which could only be used for producing grand effects (Thistlethwaite 1984:9). Sometimes organs were fitted with a small keyboard from which the pedal pipes could also be played, as at St. James, Bermondsey (1829) and Birmingham Town Hall (1834).

Gauntlett campaigned for the universal adoption of the CC pedal-board, together with a sufficient number of stops, properly voiced to support an independent pedal line. His scheme for the organ, built by Hill, for Christ Church, Newgate Street (1835), had the following pedal division:

Open Diapason	16
Open Wood	16
Montre (open, metal)	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Fifteenth	4
Tierce Mixture	V
Larigot Mixture	V
Contra Posaune	16
Posaune	8

One octave for flute ranks
Four notes only for reeds

(Williams 1980:174)

It would seem, in view of the limited compass of the flute and reed ranks, that Gauntlett's ideas were not always adequately realised in practice. By the middle of the century, however, CC pedal-boards of either 30 or 32 notes, upon which Bach's pedal lines could be played, were generally provided. This was largely due to the efforts of Gauntlett; and Mendelssohn acknowledged his achievement in helping to bring about a revolution in English organ-building: '...but for him - Dr. Gauntlett - I should have had no organ to play on. He ought to have a statue...' (MS 26th Feb.1876:134 [Gauntlett's obituary]).

(c) Contrasting choruses

Another result of Gauntlett's work, in association with William Hill, and influenced by the requirements of Bach's organ music, was a change in the relationship between the Swell and Choir divisions. Until this time, the Swell had been a short-compass, echo-cum-solo department. Now it was given a full compass, comparable with that of the Great, and with a chorus of similar power. As a result of this change in the importance of the Swell division, the Choir tended to contain either solo stops, and/or stops suitable for accompanimental purposes.

(d) Temperament and tuning

Until well into the 19th century English organs were tuned to a form of unequal temperament. Reliable information concerning English organ temperament is difficult to find. Padgham (1986:86-93) gives four different examples from the 18th century. A writer in 1854 described it in the following terms:

.....The ordinary keys - C, G, F, and D, were kept very good; while from these points of departure every successive advance brought an increase of disagreeables, until the climax of horror was reached in the keys of A flat, D flat, and G flat, which were absolutely unuseable except in cases of the greatest emergency..... (MW vol.xxxii, 1854:699)

During the first half of the century, there was a general movement towards the adoption of equal temperament, and it would appear that the music of J. S.

Bach was responsible. It is likely that, in the early years of the century, organists thought of *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* as organ music, because it contained fugues. Therefore, it was assumed that in order to make the fugues in the remoter keys playable, that Bach advocated the use of *equal* temperament. Dr. William Crotch (1775–1847) was an enthusiastic advocate, justifying his ideas by invoking the name of Bach:

.....in doing so, he [Crotch] is contending for the higher authority of the judgement and practice of one whom, he trusts, his opponents must venerate and admire - SEBASTIAN BACH..... (Crotch 1856:86)

This was based on the misunderstanding that *well*-tempered (*Wohltemperirte*) meant the same as *equal*-tempered, for which the Germans had a special term - *Gleich-Schwebende Temperatur* (equal beating temperament). There is no evidence to support the view that Bach ever played on an organ tuned to *equal* temperament (Padgham 1986:36). It is interesting to note that Crotch's contemporary, Samuel Wesley, who brought out the first English edition of the '48' between 1810 and 1813, used an organ tuned to unequal temperament for their performance in 1812.

Whether or not the result of a misinterpretation, or a misunderstanding, of Bach's intentions, *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* nevertheless contributed towards the move to equal tempered tuning on the organ. There were also other forces at work. As long as the organ was only required to accompany the standard repertoire of English church music of the time, all was well. However, the use of the organ in lieu of an orchestra to accompany oratorio, highlighted the deficiencies of the older temperament. Tuning also led to other problems, as the *Musical Gazette* pointed out: '...The organ is often rendered useless in an orchestra for the same reason [temperament], or entire movements must be transposed into another key...' (MG vol.ii, 1857:114). The increased use of chromaticism and modulation in pianoforte and orchestral writing, and the transcribing of this for the organ, highlighted the inadequacies of the unequal temperaments, in the light of the new demands that were being made of the instrument.

The Application of 19th Century Technology to Organ-Building

The first half of the 19th century was marked by a consolidation of the advances made during the Industrial Revolution. It was the time of great feats of engineering - railways, bridges, steamships etc., and it was inevitable that these advances in technology would be applied to the art of organ-building.

Perhaps the most important of these technological innovations was the development of the mechanical-pneumatic key-action, known as the 'Barker-lever', after its inventor, Charles Spackman Barker (1804-1879); although a similar device was also developed independently by both Booth of Wakefield and Hamilton of Edinburgh. This mechanism allows an average finger-pressure from the key to operate pipes at some distance away from the keys, previously only possible with the heavy 'long-movement' tracker action.

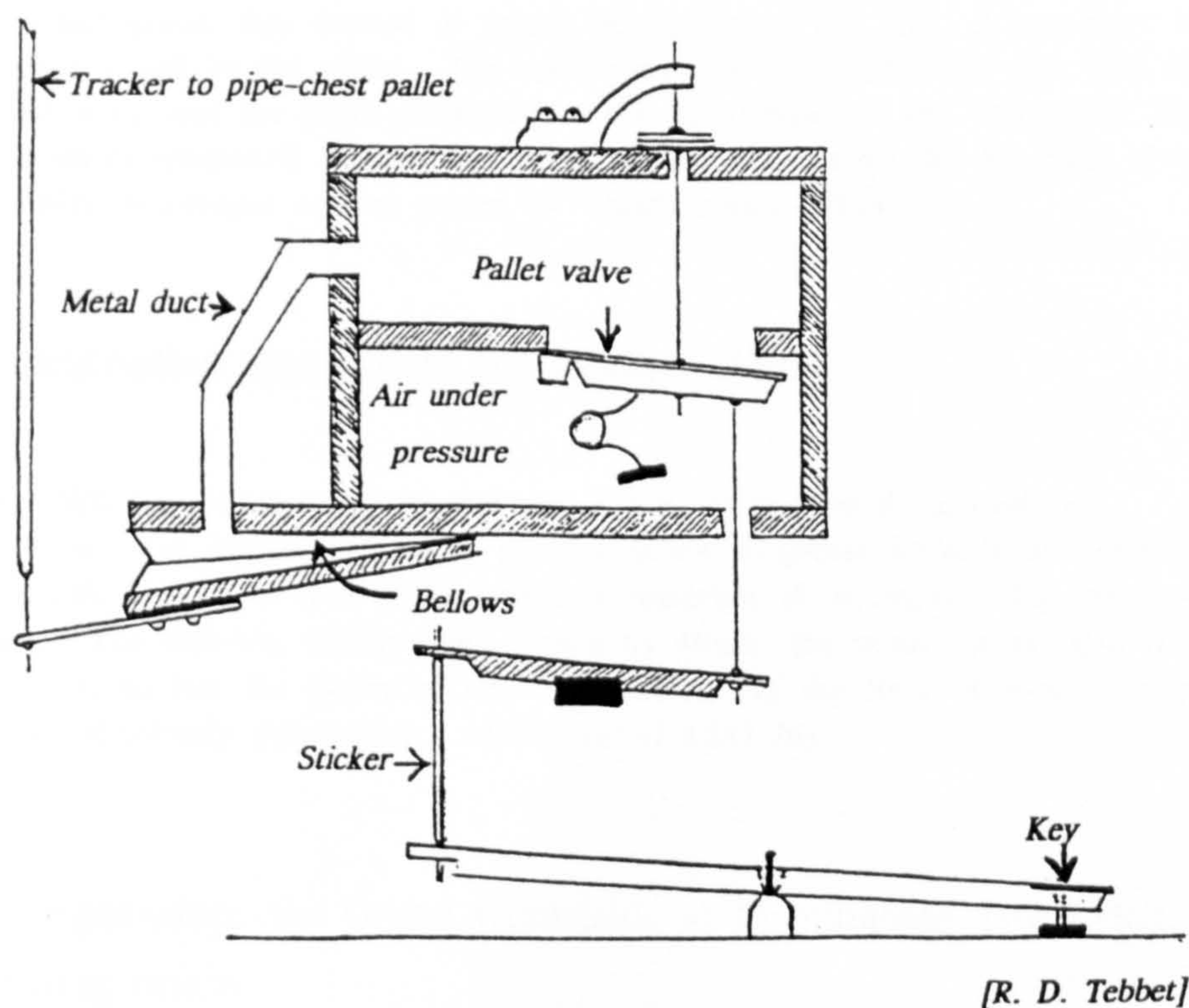


Fig.1 Mechanical-pneumatic organ key-action - the 'Barker-lever'.

This invention freed organ builders from the limitations imposed on the size and layout of organs by a direct mechanical action. It enabled pipes to be placed on separate wind-chests, away from the main body of the instrument, and was useful for the new heavy-pressure wind-chests which were then being developed. The system could be used for coupling together the different keyboards of the organ, and was also applied by Henry Willis (1821-1901) to the sliders for the stops, and to various methods of controlling the stops, such as thumb-pistons (1851). Barker's French patent was taken out in 1839, and the organ builder, Aristide Cavallé-Coll (1811-1899), applied the system to his epoch-making organ at St. Denis Abbey, near Paris (1841) (Williams 1980:167).

William Hill had developed heavy-pressure reed-tone for the organ he built for Birmingham Town Hall, and this was a combination of art and industry of which the Victorians would have been proud.

.....The son of one of the principal railway directors [of the Grand Junction Railway].....imagining that some other and more musical mode of warning people of the approach of a train, than the horrible whistle, might be adopted, had two octaves of these large trumpet pipes made, and acted on by steam power, but their sound proved to be so beautiful and grand, that instead of people getting out of the way, it was more likely that the reverse would be the effect. The consequence of the experiment was, that they were dispensed with, and the pipes presented to the great organ in the Town Hall, Birmingham, and afterwards completed through the extent of the organ keys, by Mr. Hill of London.....
(*unidentified newspaper cutting* quoted by Thistlethwaite 1984:12)

The following description appeared in the *Musical World*:

.....Mr. Hill has designed.....for the use of the newly-formed railroads at Birmingham.....an instrument which is constructed altogether without the introduction of either wood, leather, or any of the ordinary materials of an organ. The whole is of iron or brass. The bellows, wholly iron, blown by steam; the wind chests, also iron, and the pipes brass, so that the power of tone is rendered (by the force of wind and quality of the metal) extremely penetrating.....(MW vol.vi 1837:76)

Rarely can an organ-stop, the Grand Ophicleide at Birmingham Town Hall, have had such an interesting origin.

The Barker-lever, and the newly-developed stops which required a heavier pressure of wind, needed an improved method for providing an adequate supply of wind. This was achieved by providing reservoirs for the wind, in addition to the bellows. Improved methods of raising the wind, such as the application of steam-power, were also developed.

Organ builders also devised methods of making the instrument more expressive. The idea of enclosing some of the pipes of an organ in a box, the front of which could be raised or lowered, thus enabling the player to produce the effect of a crescendo or diminuendo, was an 18th century development. This device, known as the 'swell', was supposedly first introduced by Abraham Jordan in 1712 in the organ for the church of St. Magnus, London Bridge; an advertisement in *The Spectator* of 8th February 1712 declaring that one of the keyboards was '...adapted to the art of emitting sounds by swelling the notes, which never was in any organ before...'. Similar devices, however, had been used in Spanish organs over the previous half-century (Williams 1980:138), and the organ-builder Renatus Harris (1651/2-1724) claimed to have tried out a similar device at Salisbury Cathedral (Clutton & Niland 1963:80). In his proposal of 1712 for a west-end organ in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Harris recommends that one of the six keyboards '...be adapted for the emitting of sounds to express Passion by swelling any Note, as if inspired by Human Breath...' (Sumner 1962:191). Although this dates from the same year as Jordan's introduction of the swell, it is likely that this refers to Harris's experiments with the multiple subdivision of single notes (Clutton & Niland 1963:79). Harris's experiments and the introduction of the swell reveal that, even in the 18th century, there was a move to try to make the organ a more 'expressive' instrument. The original swell, known as the 'nags-head swell', was not very refined or effective, consisting, as it did, of an apparatus which merely raised or lowered the front of the box. The development of the 'Venetian swell', which was also used in harpsichords, was a great improvement. 19th century organ builders exercised great ingenuity in improving the control and effectiveness of the swell. At Gloucester Cathedral, in 1847, Henry Willis introduced a double 'Venetian swell', and described the resulting pianissimo as '...simply astounding...' (Sumner 1955:14). It became customary to enclose some of the 'orchestral' stops on the newly developed 'solo' organs in a swell-box, in order to render them more expressive.

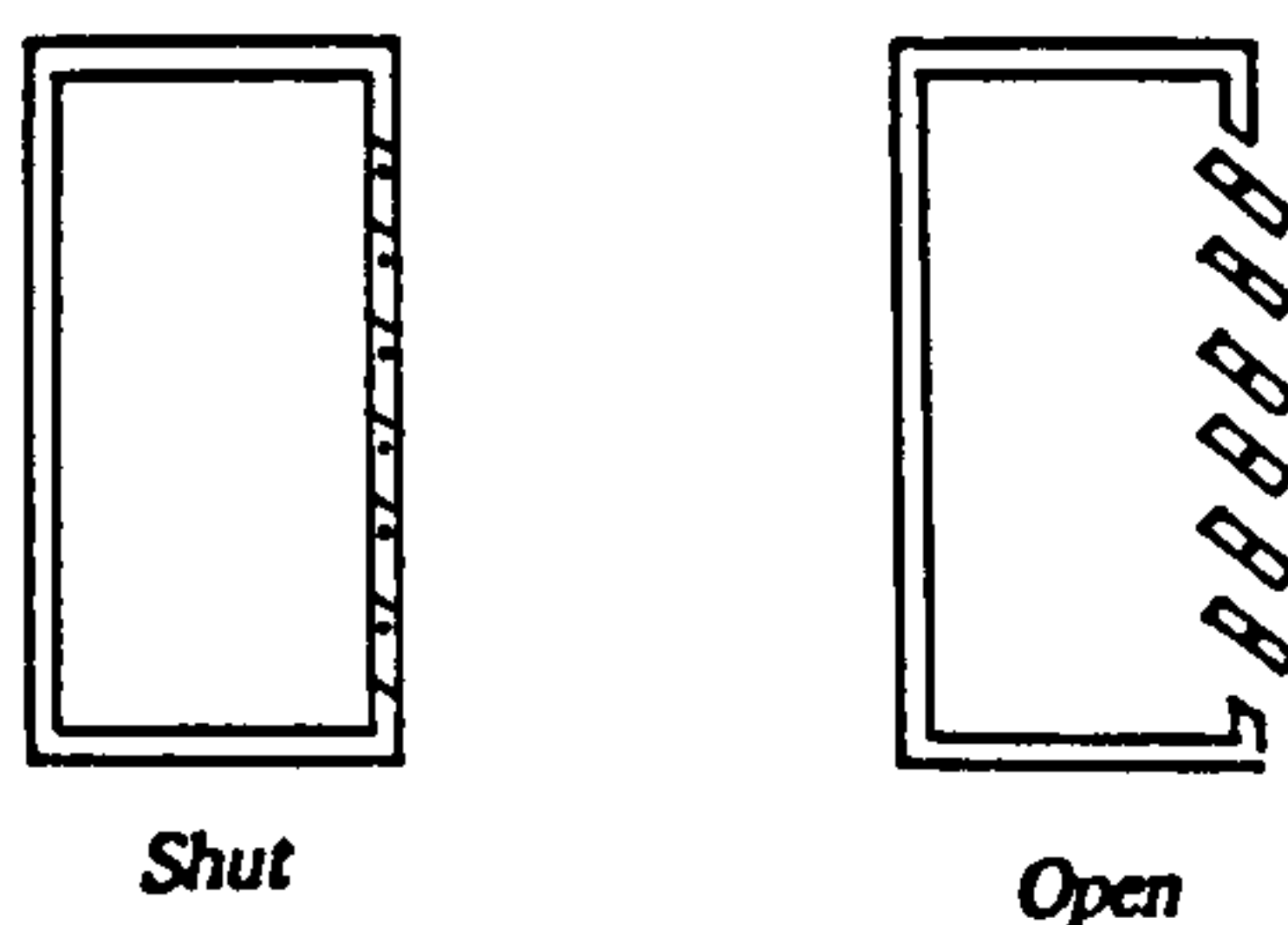


Fig.2 The 'Venetian' swell.

The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall

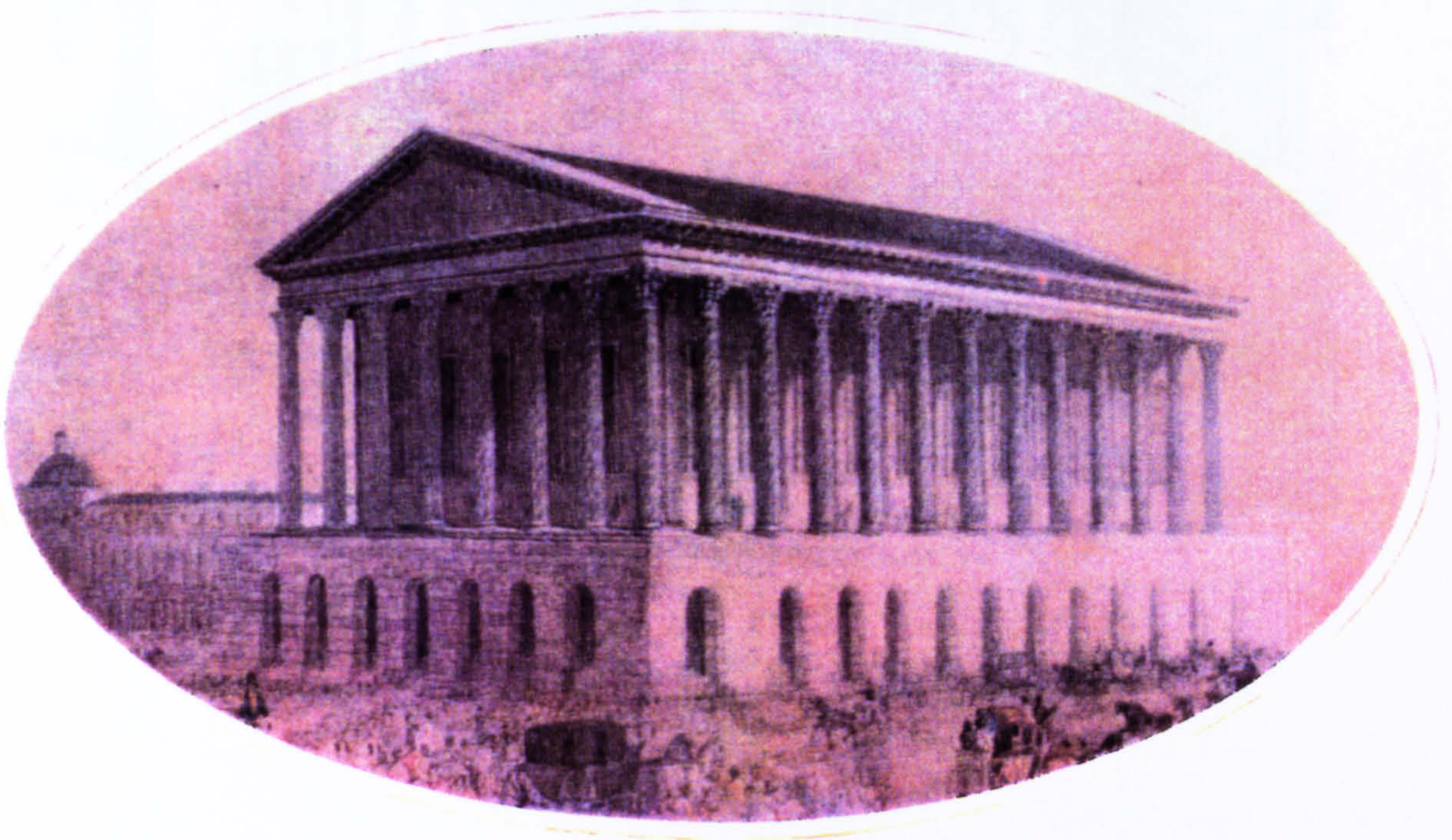
As William Hill's organ for Birmingham Town Hall can lay claim to be the first of the great 19th century Town Hall concert organs, and as the design shows how new ideas were being absorbed and new technologies applied, it is worthwhile to consider this instrument in more detail.

Birmingham Town Hall was completed in 1834, in order to accommodate the Birmingham Triennial Music Festivals which were held in order to raise funds for the General Hospital. It was agreed that the governors of the hospital should be allowed to erect an organ, at their own expense, in the Town Hall. In fact, the organ remained the property of the hospital until 1922 (Thistlethwaite, MT vol.cxxv, no.1700, Oct. 1984:593). The organ was not conceived as a solo instrument but as '...indispensably requisite for the production of those great choral effects, which have hitherto rendered the Birmingham Festivals so attractive...'².

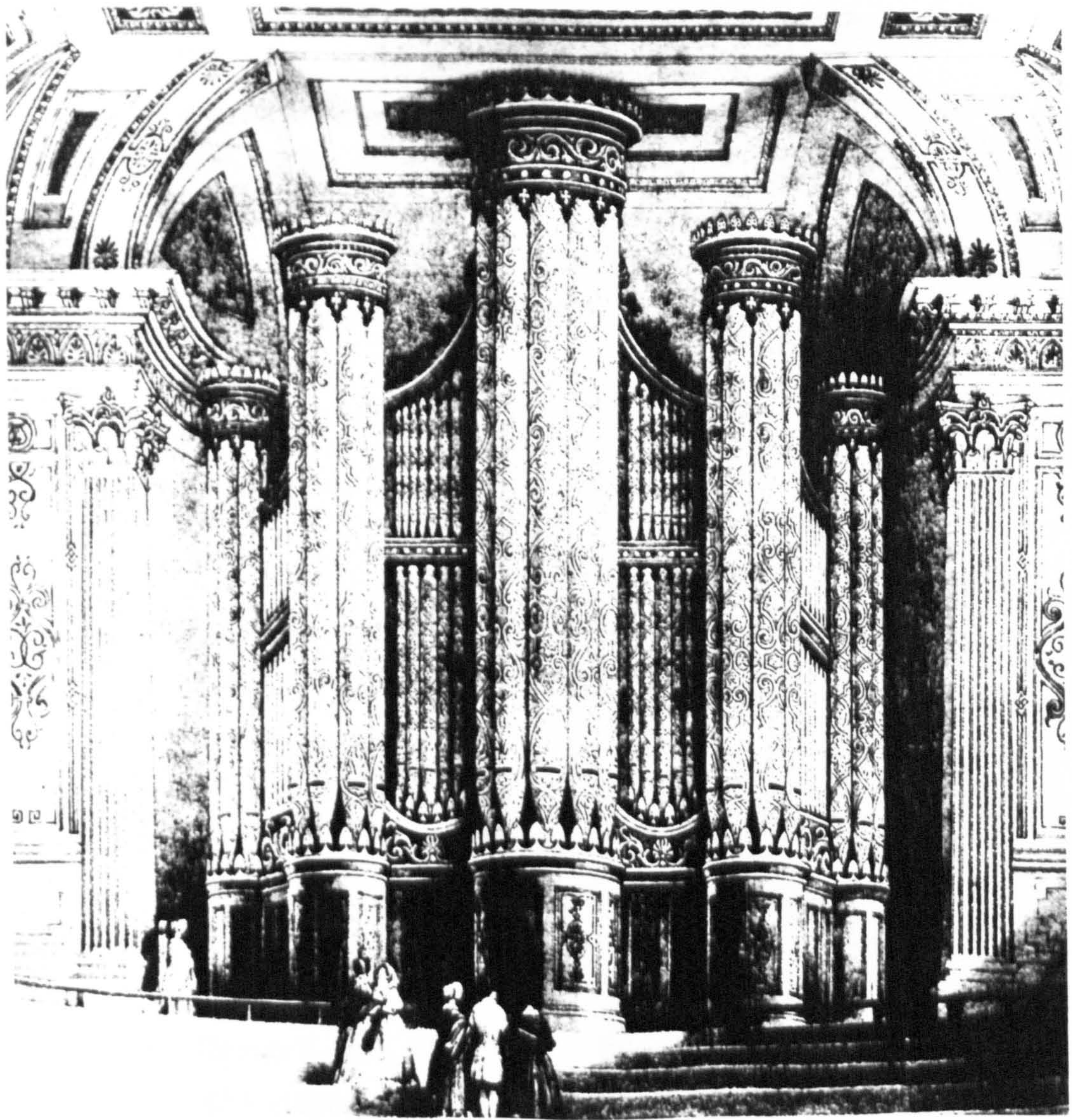
It is possible that Sigismund Neukomm, Vincent Novello and Joseph Moore were all involved with the design of the instrument, and it is clear that the large continental organs were a major influence. However, it was an Englishman, William Hill, who was chosen to build the instrument. At this time he had not been abroad, and although Neukomm and Moore could describe the large European instruments, Hill was not sufficiently experienced to construct one along the same lines.

The principles of Hill's design are comparable with other monster designs of the 1830's, such as that for York Minster (also built by Hill), in which the duplication of existing registers and the use of pipes of the largest dimensions were thought of as the means of producing a large sound. The keyboard compass began at 16 ft. C, and Hill provided two octaves of pedals. There were, however, only three pedal stops, two of which were of 32 ft. pitch, the intention being to provide a grand effect, rather than to supply an independent pedal line. A two-octave finger keyboard was also provided from which the pedal pipes could be played. Contemporary accounts commented on the reed-stops Hill provided for the instrument. *The Penny Magazine* (8th Nov.1834) considered the Posaune to be '...the most powerful and richest in tone of any existing...' and that it was an '...effectual aid in blending the voices into one mass...' and adding '...at least fifty per cent to their power...'. During the Festival of 1834, at a performance of *Let us break their bonds asunder* from Handel's *Messiah* '...there was...a very fine display of the organ produced by its being taken off in one of the repetitions of the movement, and then suddenly put on again with the tremendous Posaune and all its vast powers...' (*Morning Post*, 11th October 1834).

[original in colour]



16. *Water-colour of the original competition design for Birmingham Town Hall by W. Harris.*



*17. The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall c1846.
[Birmingham Central Library, Local Studies Department]*

At the official opening of the instrument (29th August 1834) and during the subsequent Music Festival (6th-9th October 1834), the organ was used almost exclusively for purposes of accompaniment. The one use of the organ as a solo instrument was when Neukomm performed his *Fantasia upon the Organ with the Imitation of Thunder*, the result being described as '...unfortunate...' by the *Morning Post* of 11th October 1834.

The console was situated 18 ft. in front of the instrument, making use of a mechanical 'long movement'. This enabled the organist, as principal accompanist at the Music Festivals, to be in close contact with the conductor. The action, as a result, was very heavy, as Mendelssohn found out when he played the instrument, and recorded in a letter dated 24th July 1845:

.....as for the heavy touch, I am sure that I admired your organist very much who was able to play a Fugue on them [the pedals]. I am afraid that I would not have strength enough to do so, without a very long practice.....

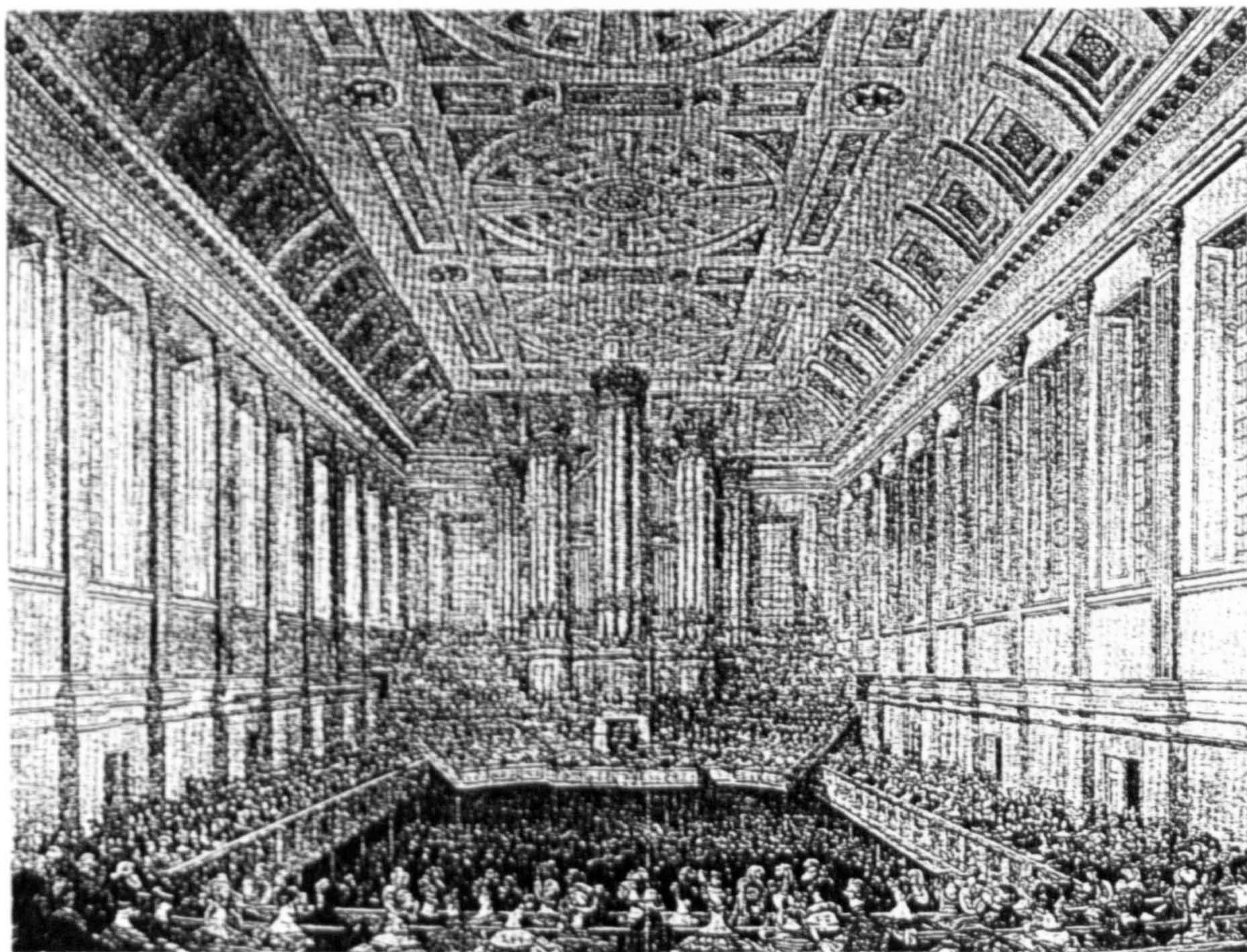
The French organ-builder, Cavallé-Coll, described the action as being '...as stiff as those made for carillons...' (Douglass 1980:208).

Another feature of the instrument, again the result of its intended use as an orchestral substitute, was the provision of a 'Combination Organ', whereby certain of the Choir and Swell stops were also available independently on a fourth keyboard. S. S. Wesley also recommended a similar arrangement in his design for the organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. There is no reliable contemporary source for the original 1834 stoplist of the Birmingham instrument.³

The instrument was very impressive in appearance having the first 32 ft. case in England. Cavallé-Coll, however, described these pipes as looking '...just like rainspouts...'. He thought that the metal pipes had a '...rather nice tone...', although the wooden 32 ft. stop sounded like '...wet drums...' (Douglass 1980:205&208).

As with the large instrument that Hill (in partnership with Elliot) built for York Minster in 1829, the Birmingham organ proved unsatisfactory. In 1863, Dr. E. G. Monk (1819-1900) while regarding the York organ as a step in the right direction, conceded that '...the prevalence of false and vague theories upon the nature and disposition of stops led to many grave errors of design...' (Aston 1972:11). Much the same could have been written about the Birmingham organ, and this state of affairs provided the impetus for various modifications and rebuildings in the years following its installation.

It was in 1840 that Hill added the very first heavy-pressure reed stop - the Grand Ophicleide. The *Mechanic's Magazine* of 25th April reported that the organ had '...lately received a most effective addition which has nearly doubled its power...'. During an improvisation by S S Wesley during the 1843 Festival '...the grand Ophicleide stop uttered with a colossal voice the sentiment of the performer...' (*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 25th September 1843).



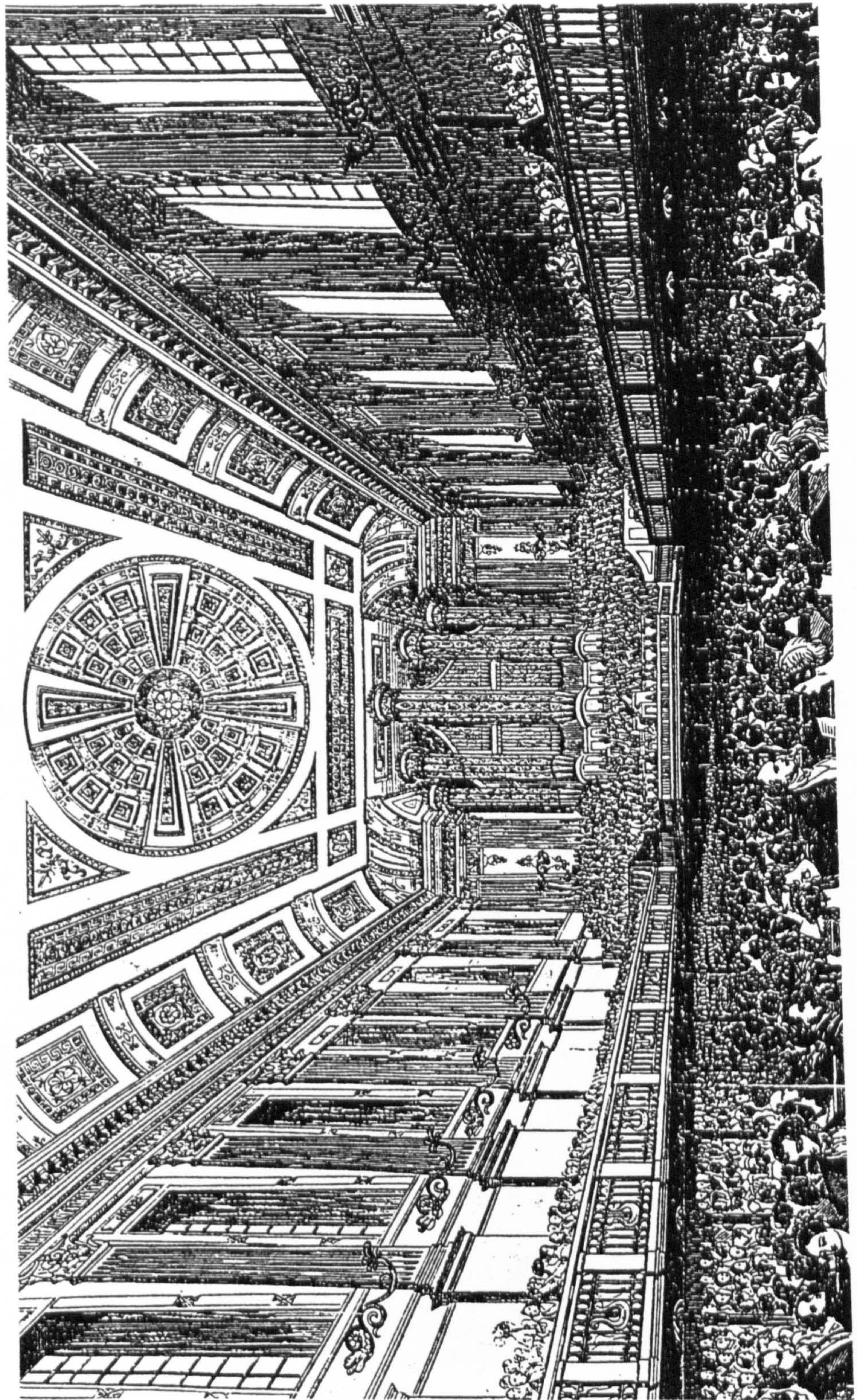
18. A drawing of the interior of Birmingham Town Hall during the 1834 Music Festival showing the position of the organ before it was moved into a recess in 1837. (from a drawing by Henry Harris)

Around 1840, Hill's ideas on organ design began to change, under the influence of Gauntlett, who had been impressed by organs on the continent of Europe, and also by the playing of Mendelssohn, whose performances of Bach's music in 1837 and 1840 at Birmingham Town Hall, had shown up the instrument's weaknesses. The following passage from the *Morning Post* of 25th September 1843, was probably written by Gauntlett himself:

.....The organ was built by Hill some ten years since, who at that time had never seen a large organ on the Continent. The design was by Novello and Neukomm - one who had never played a large organ, and the other had adopted the exploded notions of Vogler, who built a large organ at Munich on a plan which has since been universally decried. Dr. Mendelssohn never dared play on it, except with all the stops drawn out, and usually played Bach's music, in order that it might not be said, in case of failure of effect - that it was the fault of the music performed. Dr. Gauntlett it was who discovered the defects of this organ, and was in correspondence for some years with the Committee of the General Hospital on the subject. His argument was to the effect - that the organ had been built on a plan recognised by no work, art, or science - in no practical book on the organ, or in any encyclopaedia, could anything be found to support this plan. It had no variety - no brilliancy - no delicacy. Solo music could not be played upon it. No concerto sounded grandly on it, and in fact, it was but a large, lumbering *vocal* accompaniment.....

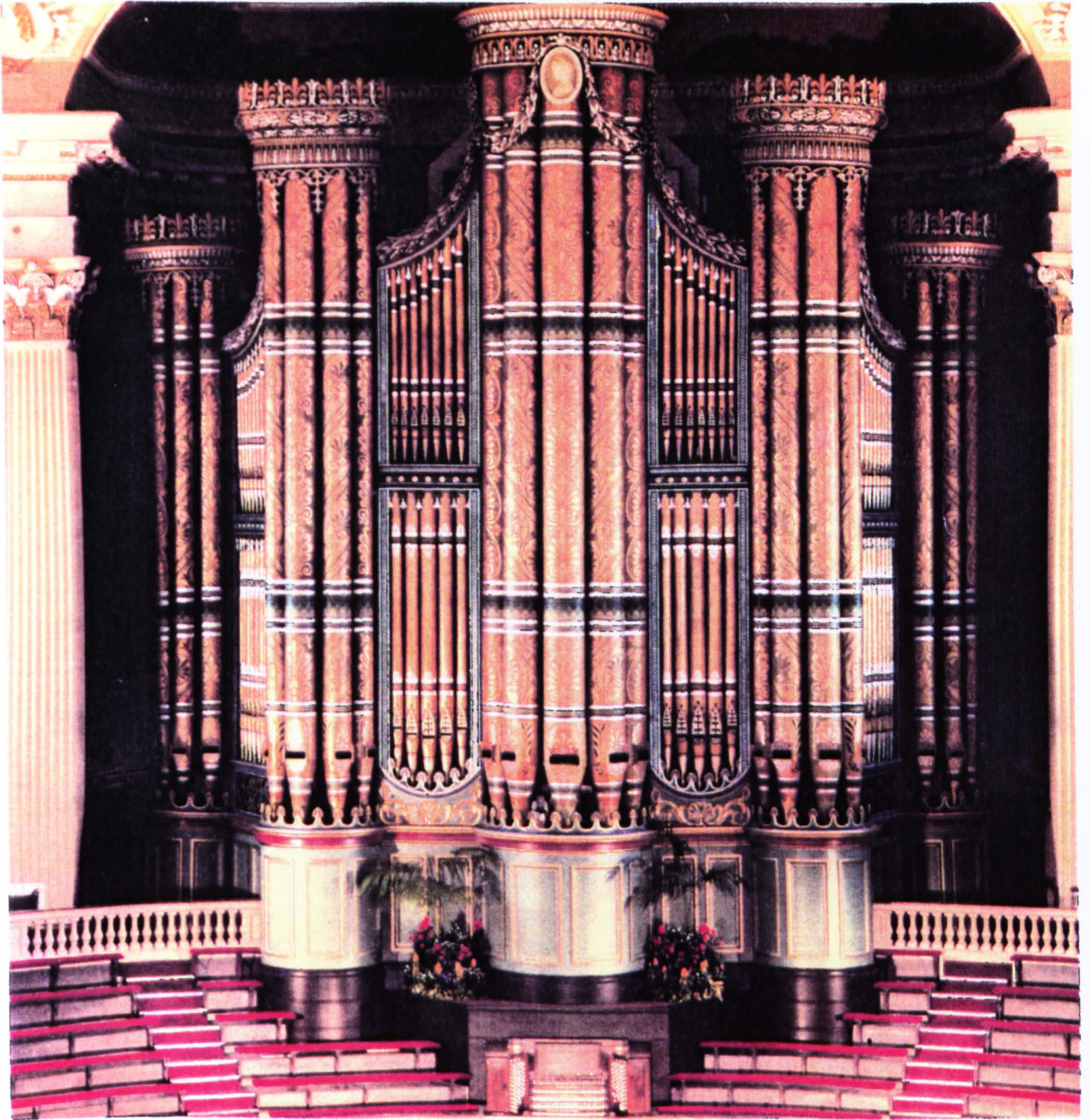
Hill did further work on the organ in 1843 and 1845. The instrument was now being used in a solo capacity. Programmes of popular music were played each week by James Stimpson (1820-1886), organist of the Town Hall, to audiences which numbered between 1,100 and 1,800 (MW vol.xix:396). The organ was used in the first performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 1846. There were still shortcomings, however, as Gauntlett's playing during this festival was '...impeded by the heavy touch...' (*Illustrated London News*, 5th September 1846:154).

When Sir Michael Costa (1808-1884) was appointed Director of the Festivals in 1849, greater platform space was required for the orchestra, and the console was repositioned. The pneumatic-lever action was applied to the Great Organ, and it is probable that at this time the instrument was tuned to equal temperament. After this, the organ remained virtually untouched for forty years - a time which saw the full development of the English Town Hall concert organ.



19. *The first performance of Mendelssohn's **Elijah**.
The Illustrated London News, 29th August 1846.*

[original in colour]



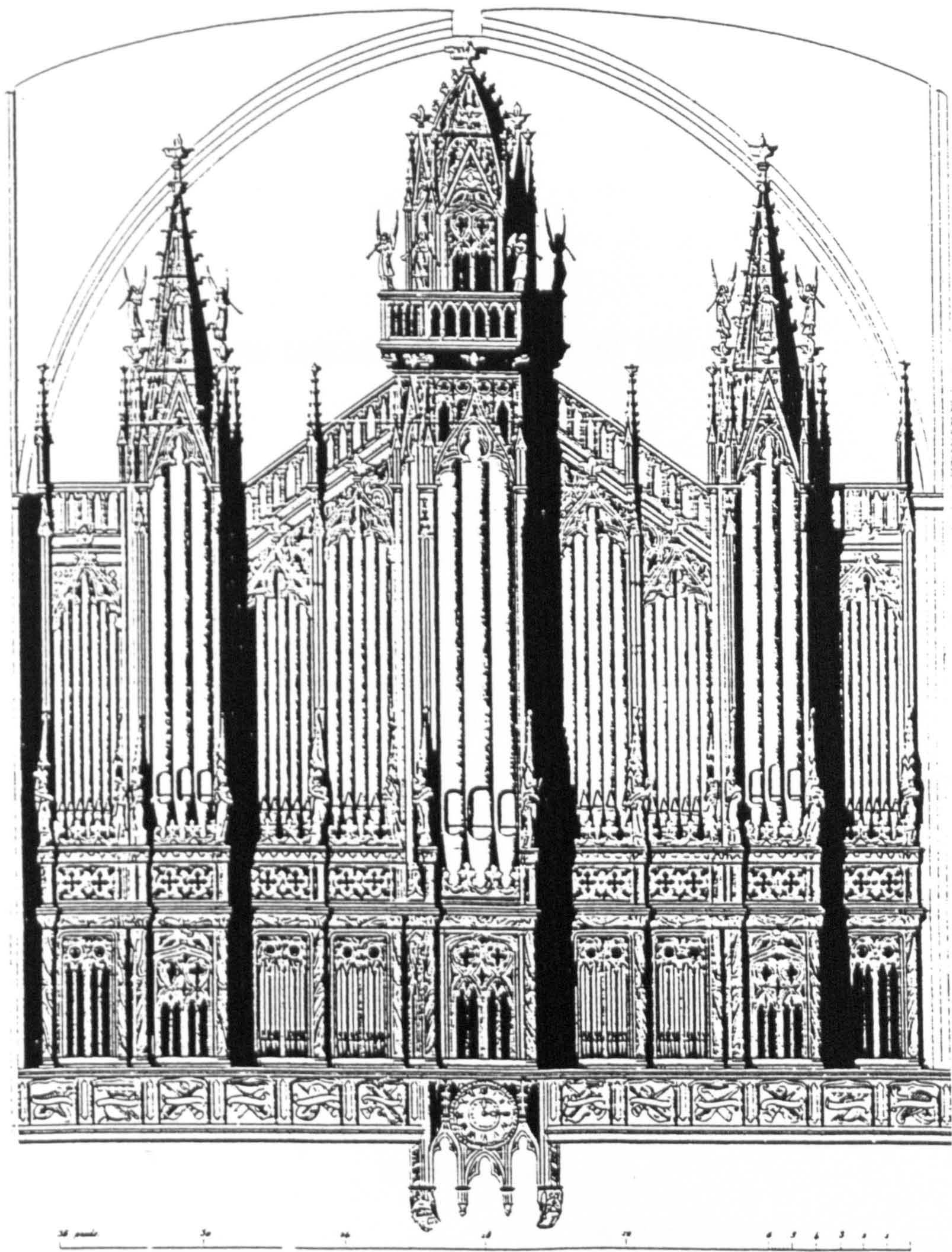
20. *The Organ in Birmingham Town Hall after rebuilding and restoration, 1984.*

Hill's work at Birmingham represented the first slow and painful steps in the evolution of the English Town Hall concert organ. Further influence from Europe came from the work of Cavallé-Coll: in particular, his instrument for the Abbey of St. Denis, near Paris.

.....At Saint-Denis, Cavallé-Coll tendered two plans, and the stoplists of 1833 and 1841 respectively show the great changes overtaking organ-building during the crucial 1830's. In 1833, the five manuals were those of the classical models and included Cornets, mutations, the traditional reeds (with some free reeds) and certain theatrical effects liked by the Berlioz generation (drums, *chapeau chinois*, etc.). But in the 1841 plan, flutes and mutations were reduced in number, overblowing stops were now included, further string stops gave a new stridency, the free reeds were discarded, Barker's pneumatic lever made possible a more complicated layout of the chests, and the wind-raising was improved by being made more copious and at higher pressure for certain chests..... (Williams 1980:172)

This instrument represented a great stride along the road towards a 'romantic' concept of the organ (Sumner 1946:22), and perhaps achieved, in terms of the French organ tradition, what Hill and Gauntlett attempted in terms of the English.

There was, however, in England, a conservatism, demonstrated by S. S. Wesley's plan for the organ of St. George's Hall, Liverpool - which recommended duplication of registers, provision of a 'Combination Organ', GG compass, and tuning to unequal temperament. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Liverpool Law Courts Committee, charged with the responsibility of choosing a builder for this instrument, should wish to see and hear the instruments at the Great Exhibition of 1851 - the great show-case of the industrial and artistic achievements of the early Victorian period.



C^o ORGUE DE L'ÉGLISE ROYALE DE SF DENIS.
 construit par MM CAVAILLE-COLL père et fils, facteurs d'Orgues du Roi.
 inauguré le 21 Septembre 1841
 Dessin de M.F DEBRET architecte de l'Église royale

21. The façade of Cavallé-Coll's organ for St. Denis Abbey, near Paris.
 [J. Adrien la Fage: *Orgue de l'Église Royale Saint-Denis, Paris, 1846*]

CHAPTER 3

THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851

*Gather, ye Nations, gather! From forge, and mine, and mill!
Come, Science and Invention; Come Industry and Skill!
Come with your woven wonders, the blossoms of the loom,
That rival Nature's fairest flowers in all but their perfume;
Come with your brass and iron, Your silver and your gold,
And arts that change the face of earth, unknown to men of old.
Gather, ye Nations, gather! From ev'ry clime and soil,
The New Confederation, the Jubilee of toil.*

(Words by Charles Mackay, Music by Henry Russell)

*But yesterday a naked sod
The dandies sneered from Rotten Row
And cantered o'er it to and fro:
And see 'tis done!*

*As though 'twere by a wizard's rod
A blazing arch of lucid glass
Leaps like a fountain from the grass
To meet the sun!*

(William Thackeray)

In 1847, Albert, the Prince Consort, became President of the Society of Arts. In this capacity he played a leading part in the mounting of three small Exhibitions of Arts Manufacture, in 1847, 1848 and 1849, which were promoted under the leadership of Henry Cole, an Assistant Keeper at the Record Office.

Henry Cole (1808–1882) would appear to have embodied all the ideals of the early Victorian era in range of interests and capacity for hard work. During the 1840's, under the pseudonym of Felix Summerly, he published stories for children. He helped Rowland Hill to establish the Penny Post, fought for a standard gauge for railways, established the docks at Grimsby, reformed patent laws, edited the *Journal of Design*, was an industrial designer of merit (winning the Royal Society's Silver Medal in 1845 for a Minton tea service), and pioneered technical education. Later, Cole was among the founders of the Royal Albert Hall, the museums in South Kensington and the Royal College of Music (Dodds 1952:30, de Maré 1972). He also published the first Christmas Card.

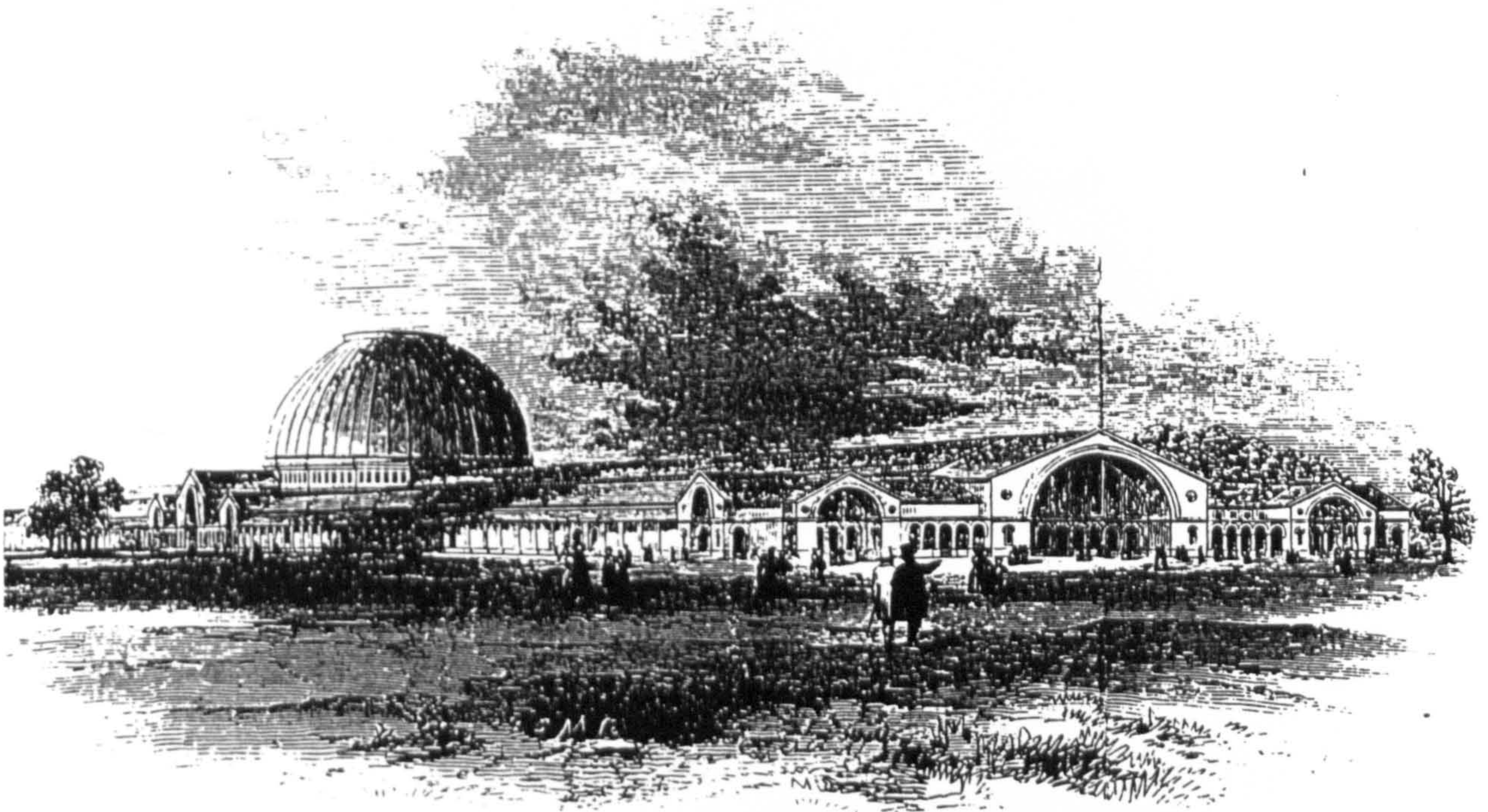
In 1849 Cole approached Prince Albert with the idea for an Exhibition of National Design and Manufacture to be held in London in 1851. The increased production of manufactured goods (a result of the Industrial Revolution) brought about a need for exhibitions, which acted as a shop window for the manufacturers. The French staged the first exhibition of national products in 1789, and by 1849, there had been a total of ten. Cole visited the 1849 Paris *Exposition* and was impressed by its size and magnificence. The exhibition also included products from the French North African Colonies, and he decided that the proposed British exhibition should include produce from the British Empire, and possibly also from other nations. Cole outlined the idea to Prince Albert, who decided that the 1851 exhibition should be international in scope – An Exhibition of the Works of all Nations. The original site for the exhibition, the courtyard of Somerset House, was deemed inadequate, and a new one in Hyde Park, opposite the Knightsbridge Barracks, was chosen.

A Royal Commission was formed early in 1850, with the Prince Consort as



22. Henry Cole (1808-1882)
[Illustrated London News, July 1873]

President, and a decision was taken to raise the required capital by means of public subscription. In a little over a year, £79,224 had been raised, with a further £250,000 underwritten by manufacturers and businessmen. The demand for floor space from British exhibitors alone amounted to some 500,000 square feet, and it was realised that a very large building would be required to house the exhibition. A Building Committee was formed which invited the submission of designs. 245 plans were submitted, but none was found acceptable. The Committee then proceeded to produce a plan of its own, which resembled a huge railway station, with a dome designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859). Public reaction was so unfavourable that the whole idea of an exhibition was put in jeopardy. In June 1850, less than a year before the opening of the proposed exhibition, Cole interested Joseph Paxton in the scheme.



23. *The Building Committee's design for an exhibition building - a cross between a railway station and St. Paul's Cathedral.*

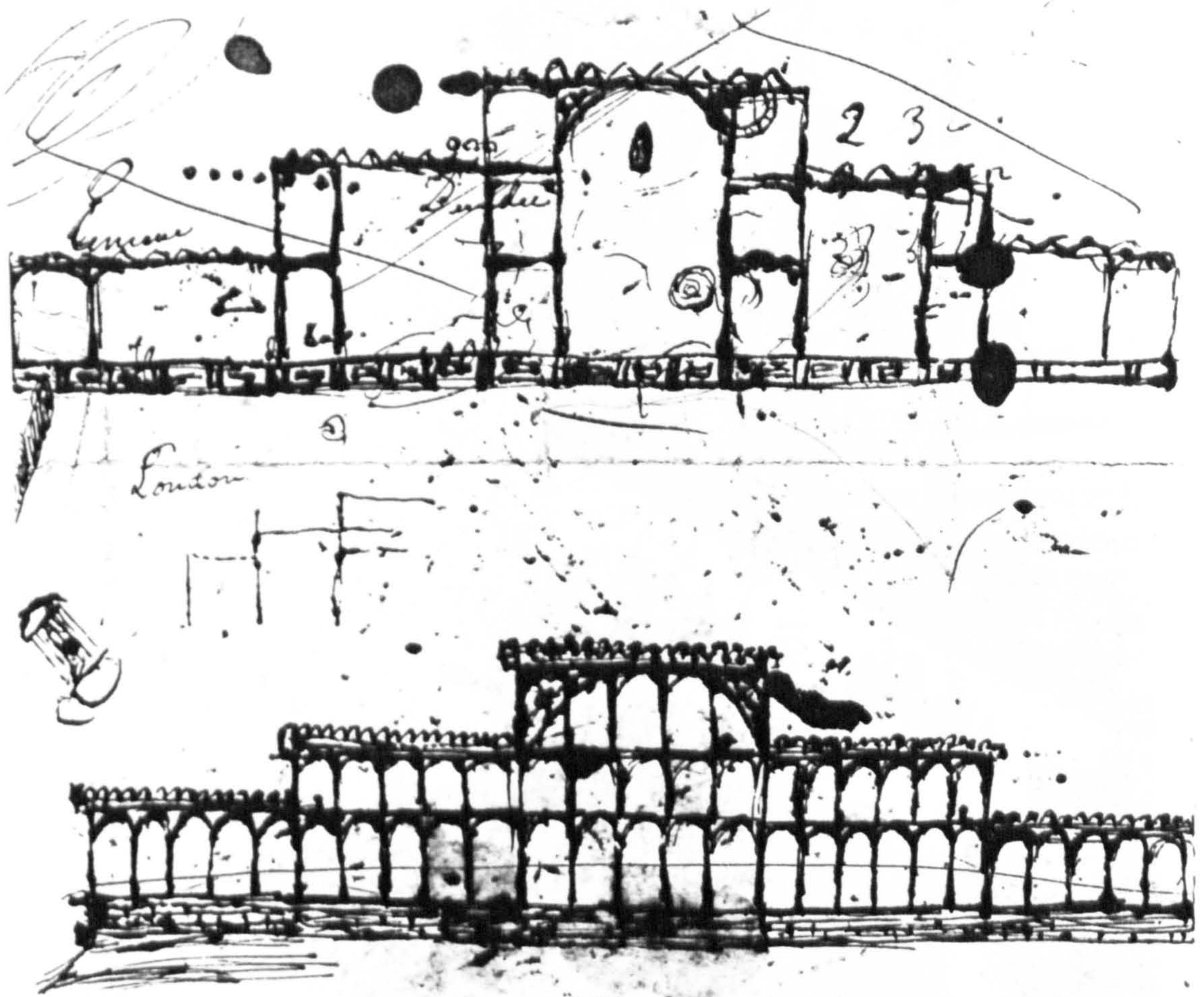
Joseph Paxton (1801-1865), like Cole, was a self-made man of wide-ranging interests. The son of a Bedfordshire farmer, Paxton became head gardener to the Duke of Devonshire at the age of twenty-three. He created the gardens at Chatsworth House, designing the Great Conservatory, which covered an acre of ground. Before long, Paxton was managing the Duke's other estates. He also designed buildings, including the model village of Edensore. In addition to being the most famous gardener in the world, Paxton made a fortune in railway shares, became a railway director, founded the *Daily News*, and wrote books on horticulture. In his last years, Paxton represented Coventry in Parliament (de Maré 1972). In 1837, Paxton was faced with the task of designing a building to house a large water-lily - the *Victoria Regia*. It was the lily itself which gave Paxton the ideas for the design of the lily-house. One day, in order to test the



24. Joseph Paxton (1801-1865)

[Contemporary steel engraving from a photograph]

buoyancy of the leaves, he placed his little daughter on one of them and saw that it took her weight without any distortion. Paxton then studied the underside of the leaf, which had radiating ribs strengthened by cross-ribs, and based the structure of the lily-house on this pattern. It had a glass roof which was supported by light wooden beams, which were hollowed out to form gutters. These were in turn supported by light tubular columns of iron (Beaver 1970:17). The Chatsworth lily-house provided the inspiration for Paxton's design for the exhibition building, which he originally sketched at a meeting of the Midland Railway Company. He planned a building 1,848 feet long and 450 wide, capable of displaying the products of the world and accomodating tens of thousands of visitors at one time, while at the same time being a purely temporary structure. This design for a huge glass building was remarkable, because Paxton had no established building methods to rely on. The materials he used allowed for standardisation and prefabrication. The whole building was completed by Messrs. Fox and Henderson in the space of nine months, and became universally known as the 'Crystal Palace'. John Ruskin (1819-1900) described it as '...a greenhouse larger than ever greenhouse was built before...'



Manchester, Buxton, Matlock, and Midlands Junction Railway. 13

No.

MEMORANDUM
o'clock Train,

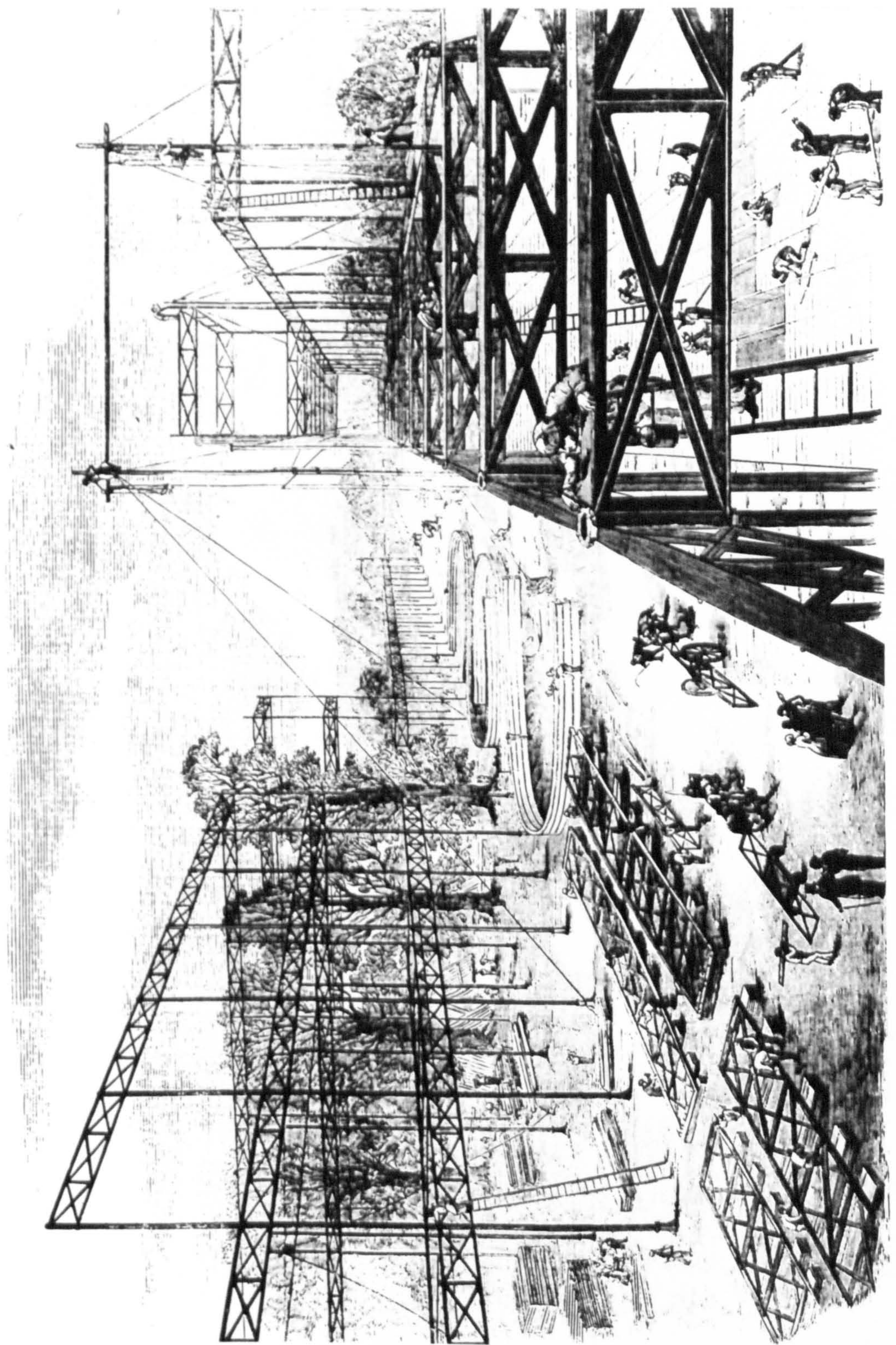
Quainton to Rugby STATION.
day, the 15 day of July, 1851

Immediate.

TELEGRAPHIC DISPATCH

From Mr. Pritchard to Mr. Paxton
I have a message from London to say that
Mr. Paxton's plan has been approved by the
Royal Commission

25. Paxton's original sketch for what was to become the Crystal Palace.



26. General view of the building of the Crystal Palace.

[Illustrated London News]

[originals in colour]



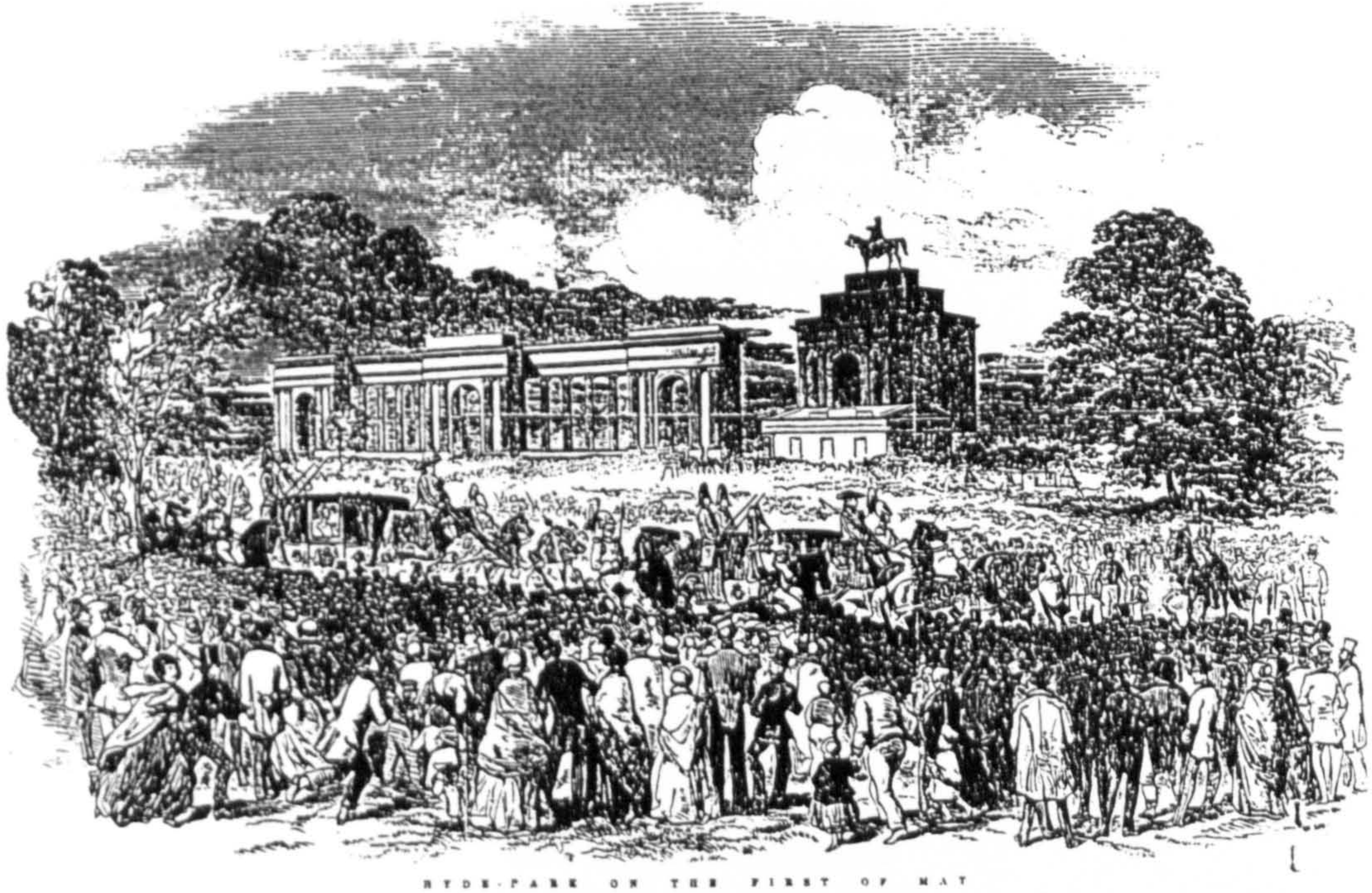
27. *View of the Crystal Palace from the north bank of the Serpentine.*
[Lithograph by Brannan, 1851]



28. *The Crystal Palace from the north-west.*

The opening of Great Exhibition

The Exhibition was opened on the 1st of May 1851. By eleven-o'clock, over half-a-million people had assembled in Hyde Park.



29. *The Illustrated London News*, 17th May 1851.

Some thirty-thousand privileged guests had gathered inside the Crystal Palace to witness the opening of the Exhibition by Queen Victoria accompanied by Prince Albert. *The Times* of May 2nd described the proceedings:

.....There was yesterday witnessed a sight the like of which has never happened before and which in the nature of things can never be repeated. They who were so fortunate as to see it hardly knew what most to admire, or in what form to clothe the sense of wonder and even mystery which struggled within them. The edifice, the treasures of art collected therein, the assemblage and the solemnity of the occasion, all conspire to suggest something even more than sense could scan, or imagination attain. There were many there who were familiar with magnificent spectacles.....but they had not seen anything to compare with this.....Around them, amidst them, and over their heads was displayed all that is useful or beautiful in nature or in art. Above them rose a glittering arch far more lofty and spacious than the vaults of even our noblest cathedrals.....It was felt to be more than what was seen or what had been intended. Some saw in it the second and more glorious inauguration of their Sovereign; some a solemn dedication day when all ages and climes shall be gathered around the Throne of their Maker; there was so much that seemed accidental, and yet had a meaning, that no one could be content with simply what he saw.....

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) recorded his impressions in verse:

I dreamt I was
Within a temple made of glass,
In which there were more images
Of gold, standing in sundry stages,
In more rich tabernacles
And with jewels, more pinnacles,
And more curious portraitures,
And quaint manner of figures
Of gold-work than I saw ever.

Then saw I stand on either side,
Straight down to the doors wide
From the dais many a pillar
Of metal that shone out full clear.

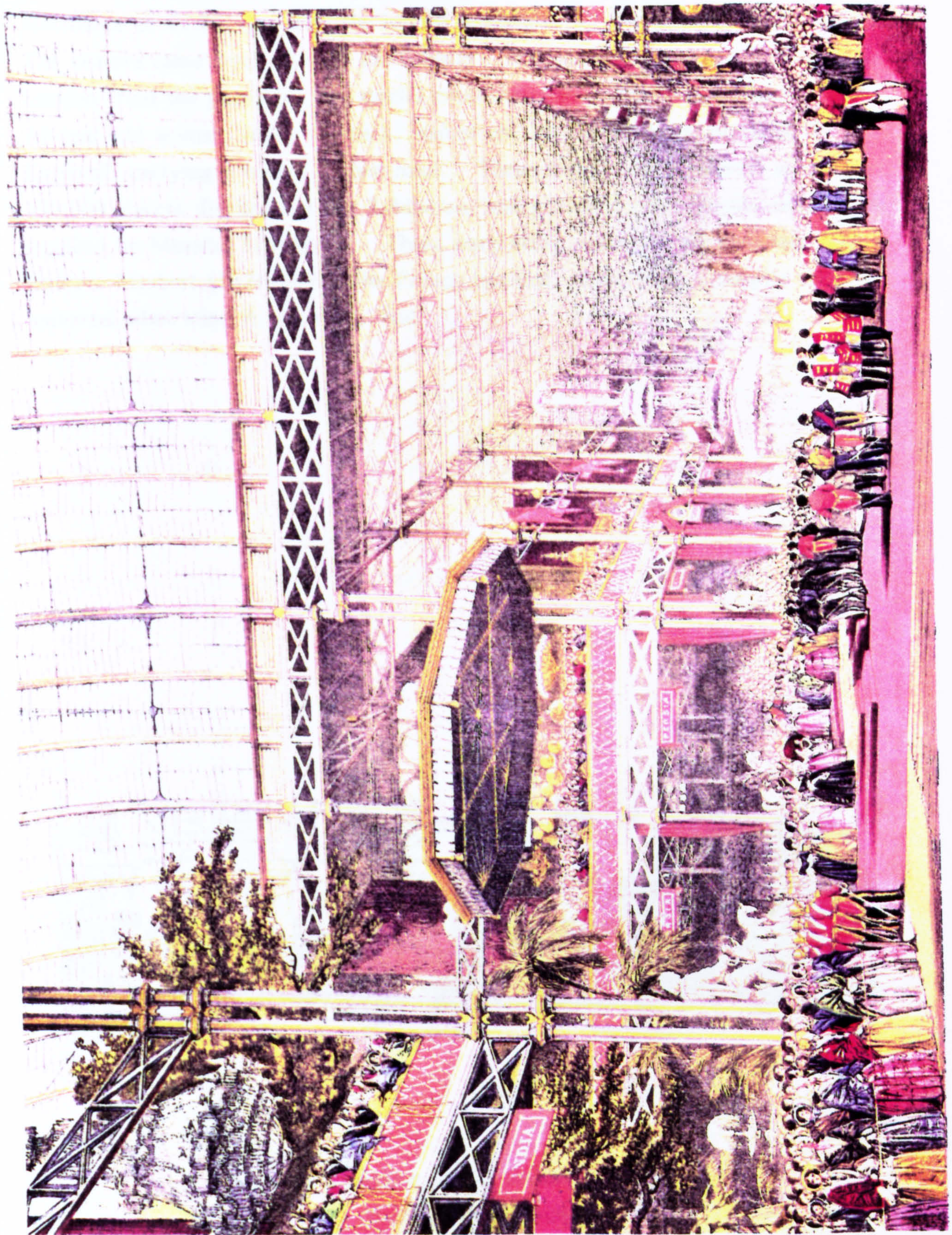
Then gan I look about and see
That there came ent'ring in the hall
A right great company withal,
And that of sundry regions,
Of all kinds of conditions
That dwell beneath the moon,
Poor and rich.

Such a great congregation
Of folks I saw roam about
Some within and some without,
Was never seen nor shall be more.

The Exhibition was opened with due ceremony by the Queen, who recorded the event in her *Exhibition Journal*.

.....The sight as we came to the centre where the steps and chair (on which I did *not* sit) was placed, facing the beautiful crystal fountain was magic and impressive. The tremendous cheering, the joy expressed in every face, the vastness of the building, with all its decorations and exhibits, the sound of the organ (with 200 instruments and 600 voices, which seemed nothing) and my beloved husband, the creator of this peace festival 'uniting the industry and art of all the nations of the earth', all this was indeed moving, and a day to live for ever..... (de Maré 1972)

[original in colour]



30. The inauguration of the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The Exhibition was open to the public from the 1st May until the 11th October. During that time there were over 6,000,000 visitors; an average attendance of 42,831 per day, the largest attendance on any one day being 93,000. The visitors came from all over the country. On 'shilling' days, people flocked to London from the provinces, by special excursion train, carts and carriages. One 84-year-old woman, Mary Callinack, walked the 300 miles, from Penzance in Cornwall, carrying a basket on her head. These visitors could marvel at the 100,000 objects displayed at the Exhibition, and purchase refreshments which were supplied by Messrs. Schweppes. There were many visitors from overseas, and Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), the French novelist, wrote that '...despite the universal admiration it was really fine...'.



*31. Omnibus to the Great Exhibition.
[Etching by Cruikshank]*

The Exhibits

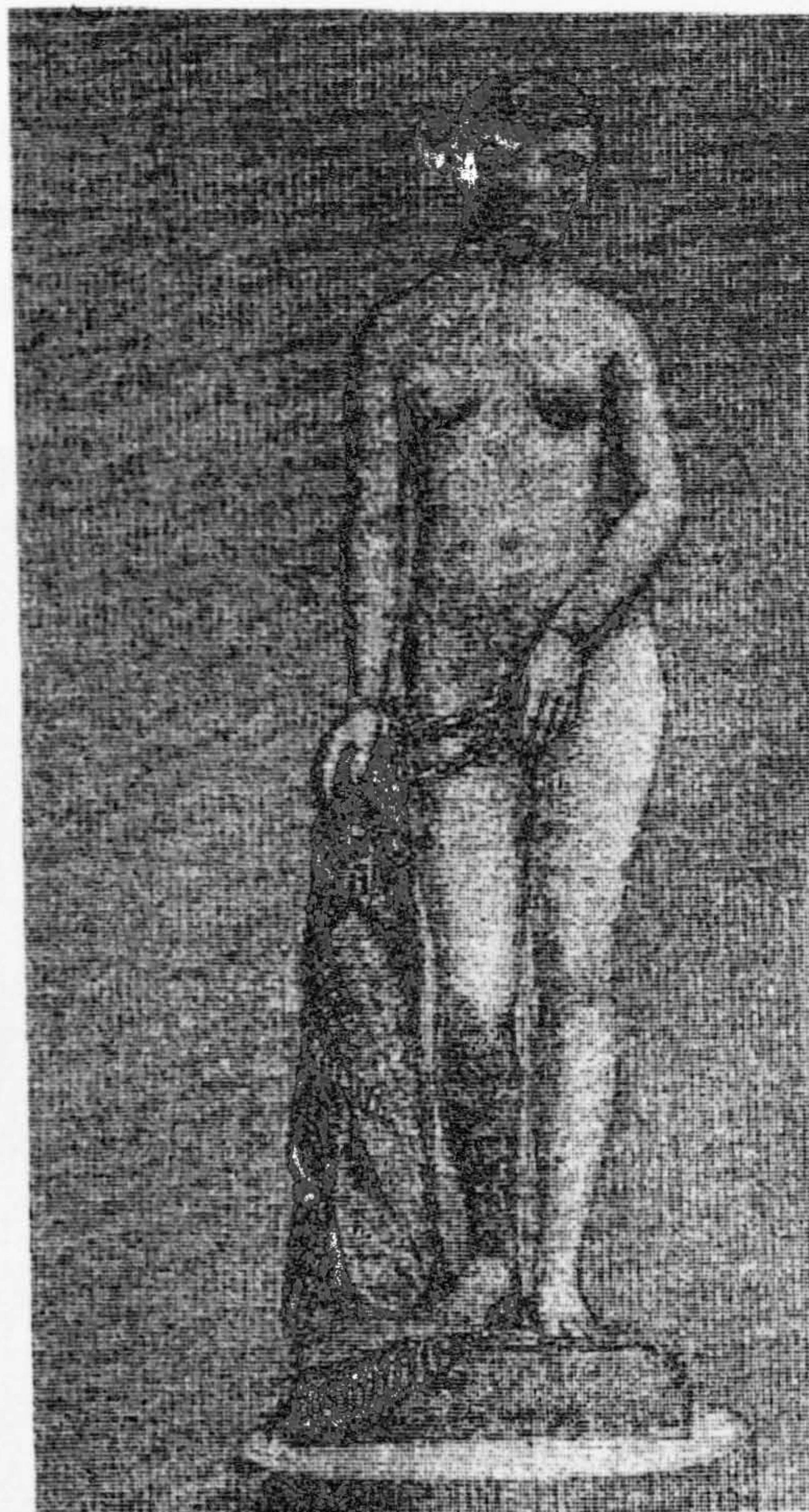
The Great Exhibition was divided into four classes - Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufactures and Fine Arts. The actual exhibits of the Exhibition of the Works of Industry and all Nations presented a strange mixture. The great achievements of the Industrial Revolution, in the harnessing of steam-power to industrial processes, perhaps, formed the best part of the display. Amongst the Machinery was the Great Hydraulic Press, Nysmith's Steam Hammer, marine engines by Watt and Maudsley, and Bessemer's centrifugal pumps. Machinery for use in the manufacture of textiles was featured, as were the newly developed means of transportation, with a 31-ton, broad-gauge railway engine designed by Brunel. Although the Exhibition was intended to promote peace amongst the nations, a selection of weaponry was on display, including Krupp's steel cannon. There were many examples of ingenuity run riot, amongst them, a patent ventilating hat and a penknife with 1,851 blades. Products of the British Empire and other parts of the world added to the exotic air of the Exhibition. Within a few feet of each other were the scientific and mechanical triumphs of the West and the offerings of the mysterious East.

It was the Manufacture and Sculpture and Fine Arts sections that emphasised the disastrous split between art and manufacture, and which highlighted the bad taste of the time. British design, in particular, came in for some harsh criticism - *The Spectator* of 8th November (page 1074) commenting on '...the prodigious amount of ugliness...' in the Exhibition, '...especially in decorative manufacture...'. The young William Morris (1834-1896) '...stared aghast at the appalling ugliness of the objects exhibited, the heaviness, tastelessness and roccoco banality of the whole display...' (Quennel 1937:103&104).

The sculptures, which were displayed around the Crystal Palace, represented the nadir of taste. They were in the worst form of narrative art, with titles like *The Amazon*, *The Veiled Vestal*, *the Circassian Slave exposed in the Market*, and *Andromeda exposed to a Sea Monster*. This bad taste was celebrated by Samuel Warren, in his *Lily and the Bee, An Apologue of the Crystal Palace*. Of the

Greek Slave, he wrote:

Brethren ye bring us a form of Beauty, and in chains!
Look ye yourselves upon her loveliness!
Ponder her thrilling tale of grief! -
She is not mute, O marble eloquent!
She pleads! She pleads!



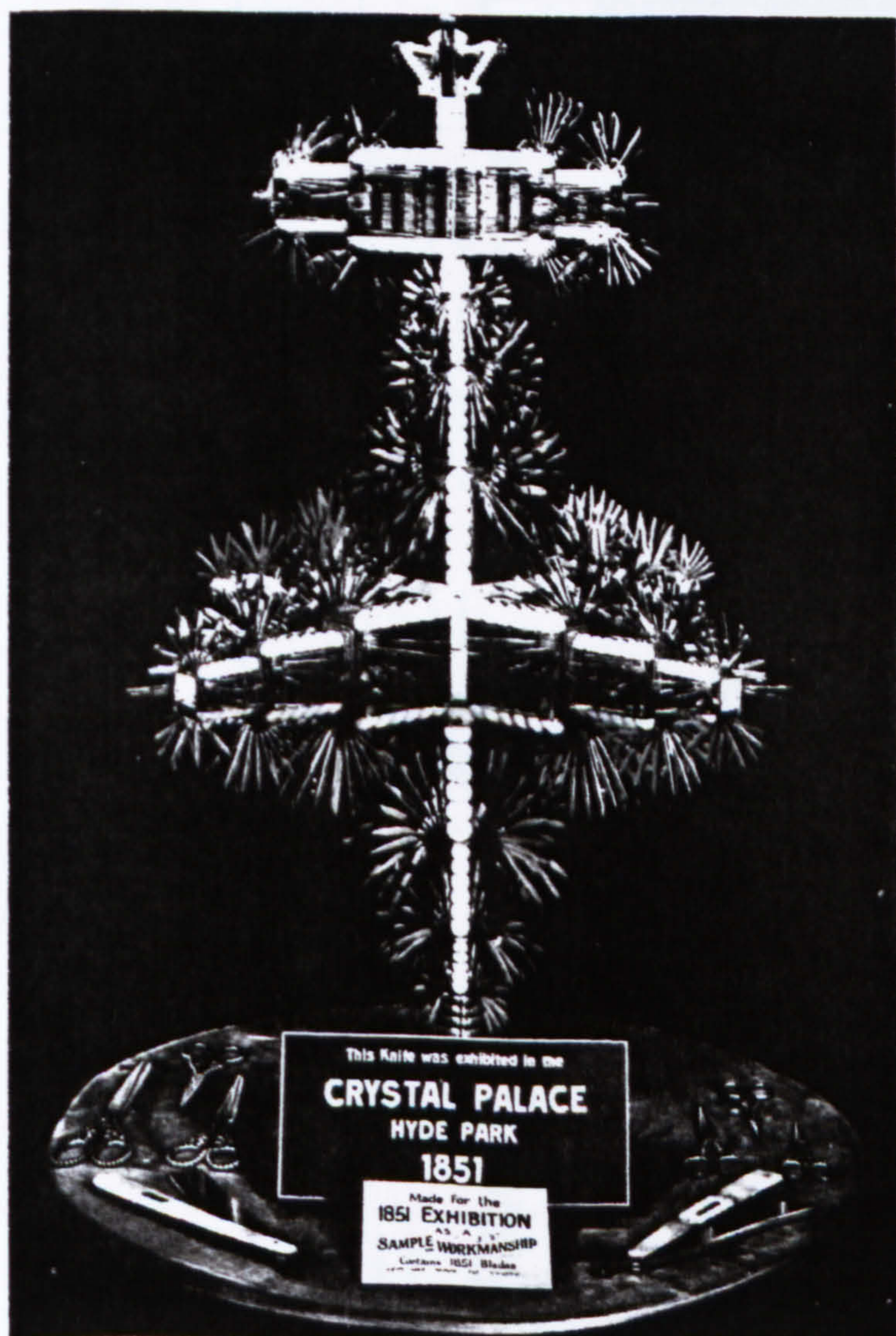
32. '*Greek Slave*' by Hiram Powers.

The tastelessness of much that was on display at the Great Exhibition was put into context by John Ruskin, in his *The Opening of the Crystal Palace Considered in Relation to the Prospects of Art* (1854):

.....In the year 1851, when all that glittering roof was built, in order to exhibit the petty arts of our fashionable luxury - carved bedsteads of Vienna, glued toys of Switzerland and gay jewellery from France - in that very year, I say, the greatest pictures of the Venetian masters were rotting at Venice in the rain, for want of a roof to cover them, with holes made by cannon-shot through their canvass.....

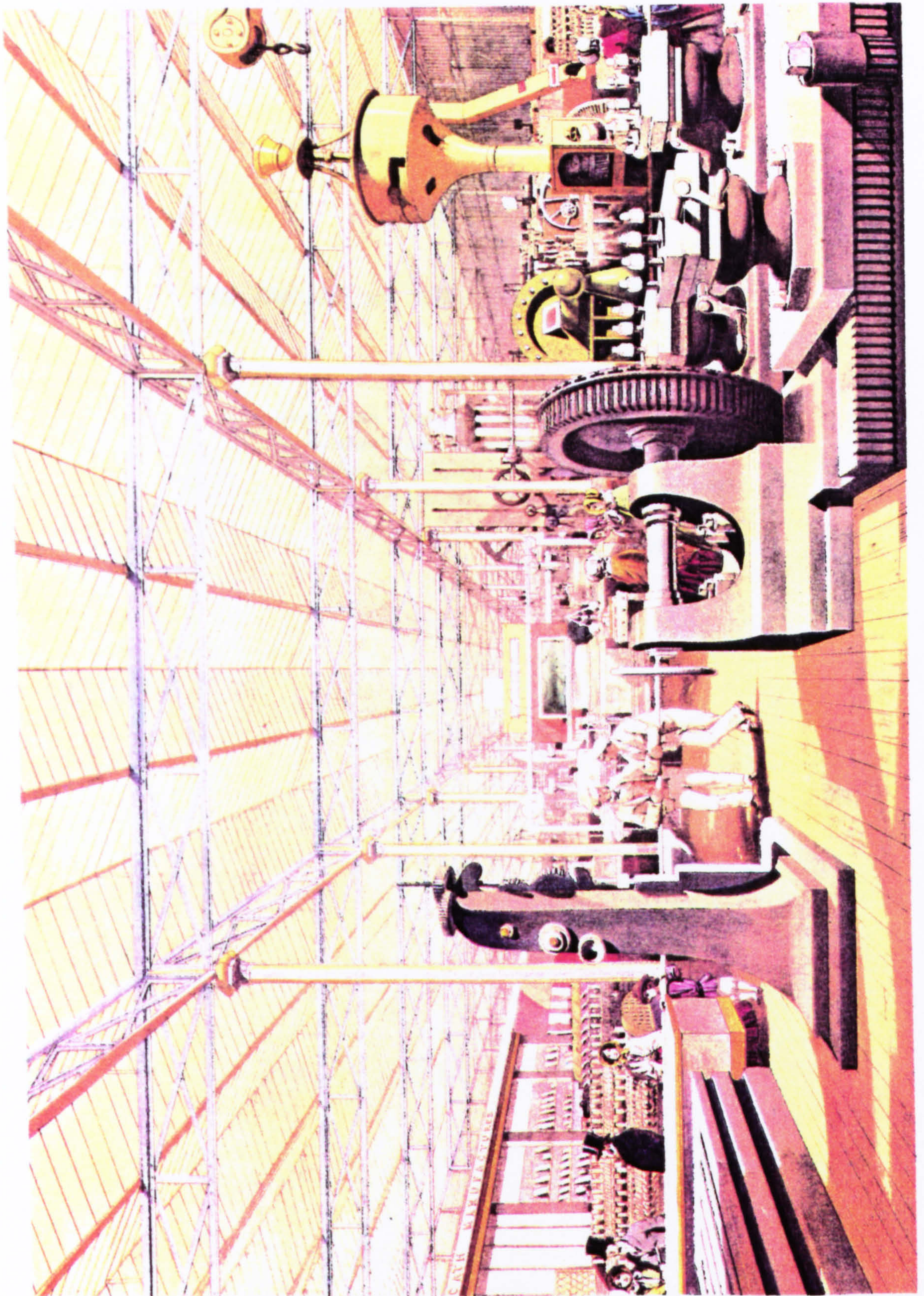
The essayist and poet, James Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), summed up the Great Exhibition, and the building that housed, it with the words '...neither crystal nor a palace...it was a bazaar...'.

In spite of this, the Great Exhibition represented a celebration of the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, and was an embodiment of the ideals, enthusiasm and progressiveness of the early Victorian period. The latest developments in technology were on display, and any lapses of taste were in the areas of design and sculpture. New technologies were being put to an artistic use in the field of organ building, and the organs which were on display at the Crystal Palace aroused a considerable amount of interest.



33. A penknife with 1,851 blades, made especially for the Great Exhibition. An example of great craftsmanship wasted on an object which is neither beautiful nor useful.

[original in colour]



34. Moving Machinery.

[Dickinson: Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851]

CHAPTER 4

THE ORGANS AT THE GREAT EXHIBITION

*Swell organ, swell your trumpet blast,
March, Queen and Royal Pageant, march
By splendid aisle and springing arch
Of this fair Hall:*

(William Thackeray)

The organs on display at the Great Exhibition would seem to have encapsulated the whole *ethos* of the Exhibition; not only did they combine industry with art, but there were examples from other countries. There was a total of fourteen; eleven English, one German, one French and one Italian. Of these, the German, French and three of the English were large instruments, the remainder being small or chamber organs.¹ Exhibition medals were awarded to some of the organ builders² by a committee of distinguished musicians.³

"The first successful large organ yet constructed in England"

The organ built by the 30-year-old Henry Willis and placed in the West Gallery of the Crystal Palace attracted considerable attention. It had been built with the financial help of patrons, chief among them, Sir James Tyler (Sumner 1955:17). Queen Victoria and Prince Albert went to hear this instrument:

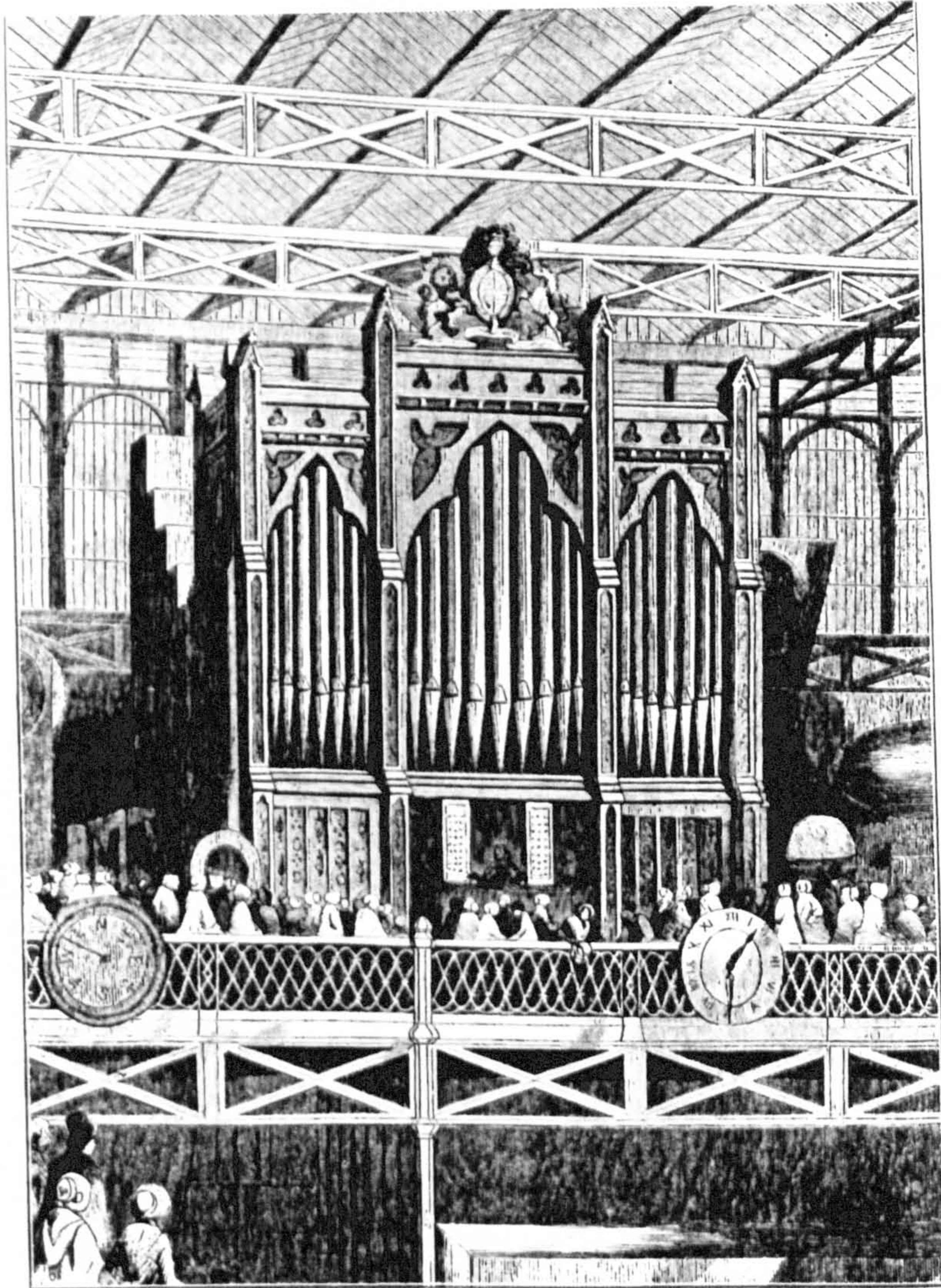
The Queen's visit to Willis's Great Organ at the Exhibition.

Her Majesty Queen Victoria, H.R.H. the Prince Albert, and party visited the Crystal Palace on Friday, July 18th, and examined this large organ. Mr. J. J. Cooper, organist of St. Paul's Church, Islington, was in attendance, and performed part of the overture to *La Gazza Ladra* Rossini, *Schlaf Schlaf, mein Kindelein* a composition by H.R.H. Prince Albert; also an air from *Il Barbieri* and by express command of Her Majesty, the March in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*..... (MW 26th July 1851)

The organ was the largest in the Exhibition⁴ and was also the most fully developed, containing many applications of new technological developments, which were outlined by the builder in his brochure.⁵ One revolutionary feature was the provision of 'thumb-pistons', to facilitate the rapid changing of the stops, placed between the keyboards. Of the pneumatic-lever action employed, Willis wrote:

.....that Exhibition organ was a great pioneer of the improved Pneumatic movement. A child could play the keys with all the stops drawn. It never went wrong..... (Sumner 1955:18)

This was a far cry from the days, not long before, when Dr. Camidge, playing at York Minster, had '...to make a full stop from actual fatigue in a very short time after the commencement of a full piece...' (Sumner 1962:339) because of the heaviness of the action.



35. *Willis's Exhibition Organ.*

Willis's organ for the Great Exhibition marks the culmination of a movement in English organ-building that had begun with Hill's organ for Birmingham Town Hall in 1834. That Willis was able to achieve this was partly attributable to the influence and example of Cavallé-Coll in France. Cavallé-Coll, described as possessing '...the most advanced mind and technique of any [organ] builder of the day...' (Williams 1966:201), had completed his 'romantic' organ for the Abbey of St. Denis in 1841. This instrument was described, by the Commission whose task it was to submit a report as '...l'orgue le plus vaste, le plus magnifique et le plus parfait que l'on recontrat alors en France...' (Sumner 1955:16)

In 1848 and 1849 Willis had visited France, and had met both Cavallé-Coll and Barker, the originator of the pneumatic-lever. There seems to be little doubt

that Willis was impressed by the tonal quality and mechanical excellence of Cavallé-Coll's instrument at St. Denis.⁶ It was probably the French organ-builder's success in erecting that large instrument and in making use of new technology, which provided the inspiration for Willis to build his Exhibition organ so soon afterwards. In addition to being 'the first successful large organ yet constructed in England', this instrument established the builder's reputation, and was directly influential in securing for Willis the contract to build what would be, at the time it was built, the largest organ in the world.



36. Willis's Exhibition Organ in the West Gallery of the Crystal Palace.

The visit of the Liverpool Law Courts Committee to the Great Exhibition

Following their decision at a meeting on 8th September, the Liverpool Law Courts Committee visited the Great Exhibition to hear the organs on display, with a view to choosing a builder for the organ which was to be installed in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, when that building was completed. Henry Willis has left us a vivid account of this visit:

.....The Town Clerk of Liverpool wrote to me to the effect that a Committee of the Corporation [of Liverpool] would visit the Exhibition on a certain day at 6 am, their object being to test the organs with a view to selecting a builder for the proposed new instrument in St. George's Hall. He asked me if I could be there. I was there - all there! The other two competing builders, A and Z, in anticipation of the visit tuned their organs in the afternoon of the previous day, with the result that, owing to the abnormal heat of the sun through the glass roof, the reeds were not fit to be heard! I said nothing. At five-o'clock on the following morning my men and I were there to tune the reeds of my organ in the cool of the morning of that lovely summer's day. At six-o'clock the Liverpool Committee, which included the Mayor and Town Clerk, in addition to S. S. Wesley and T. A. Walmisley, their musical advisers, duly appeared. Messrs. A and Z had specially engaged two eminent organists to play for them. I retained nobody, but had previously said to [William Thomas] Best, who had given several recitals on my organ at the Exhibition, 'It would not be half a bad plan if you would attend tomorrow morning at six-o'clock as you usually do for practice'. Best was there. After the other two organs had been tried, the Town Clerk, William Shuttleworth, a good friend to me, came up and said: 'We have come to hear your organ Mr. Willis. Are you going to play it yourself?' 'Do you expect an organ builder to play his own instrument?' I replied. 'If I had known that the other builders had specially engaged two organists to play their instruments, I would have done the same. Why don't you ask Wesley and Walmisley? They should be made to play, unless one is afraid of the other!' As Wesley and Walmisley declined to perform, I said to Mr. Shuttleworth, 'There is one of your own townsmen standing there, (that was Best), ask him'. He did ask him. 'Mr. Best has no objection to play' said the Town Clerk, 'but he wants five guineas!' 'Well, give it to him, the Corporation can well afford it'. The matter was arranged and I said to Best: 'Now in order that everything shall be quite fair and square, would you mind playing the same piece on all three organ?' 'What shall it be?' asked W.T.B.. 'The Overture to *Jessondá* (I was a great Spohr man). While Best was playing the overture on the other two instruments, the specially engaged organists stood on each side of him to manipulate the stops. Meanwhile, my brother, who was a clever quick tuner, again went over the trebles of the reeds, and everything was as trim as trim can be. When Best came to play on my organ, he politely declined the similar kind of help the two organists had rendered him a the other instruments, as he was perfectly familiar with my pistons, stop arrangements, etc.. It was a splendid performance, and I was told that the organ was quite a revelation to those Liverpoolians. The Committee retired to deliberate in private, but only for twenty minutes, when Wesley came up to me and said 'I am very happy to tell you that the delegate have decided to recommend you build their organ. I was perfectly cool and collected, and feeling very hungry, I went to get some breakfast with Henry Smart [1813-1879] who was also present..... (MT 1st May 1898)

Although Willis does not name his rival organ-builders, it is likely that they were Hill, and Gray & Davison. Of the fourteen organs at the Exhibition, only five were large organs '...of a scale suitable to a church or other large building...' (Newton 1852:192); and of these five, two were by foreign builders - Ducroquet of Paris, and Schulze of Paulinzelle. It is reasonable to suppose that the Liverpool Committee had only considered employing an English firm to build their organ. Gray & Davison had been the Committee's original choice, and later Hill (and also Lincoln and Bishop) had been invited to submit a tender for the contract. French organ-builders, in particular Cavallé-Coll, and more importantly the German organ-builder Schulze, were to make a greater impact on English organ-building at a slightly later date.

Hill's Exhibition organ was small, with a well-developed Great division but with a Swell that was little more than a collection of solo stops. The Pedal had one stop, and a compass of 2¹/₄ octaves.⁷ The instrument by Gray & Davison was larger and more fully developed, but contained one antique feature - the compass of the Swell was only to Tenor C, the remaining octave playing on the Choir. The Pedal division had four stops with a compass of 2¹/₄ octaves.⁸ By comparison, Willis's organ was a very bold concept, and, with its seventy stops, was able to offer a wide spectrum of tone-colour. The pneumatic-lever action made the touch light, and the thumb-pistons made possible rapid changes of the stops.

.....these studs [the thumb-pistons], lying directly below [the clavier to which they apply], can be touched easily with the thumbs, and when any one of them is slightly pushed in, in this manner, it draws the combination of stops to which it corresponds, in the same manner as composition pedals. This is effected by the aid of a pneumatic apparatus..... (Pole 1851:70)

Willis's great achievement in 1851, was to draw together the different trends prevalent in English organ-building during the first half of the 19th century, and '...overcome the mechanical problems connected with the construction of large organs and satisfy the players' demands for ease of control...' (Thistlethwaite 1990:308).

[original in colour]



37. The Organ by Gray & Davison at the extreme eastern end of the Crystal Palace.



38. The Organ by Ducroquet of Paris.

The young Organist from Liverpool

When the Liverpool Committee paid their visit to the Crystal Palace, Willis was fortunate in being able to call upon the services of the 25-year-old William Thomas Best, who had been Organist to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. He had been engaged by Willis to demonstrate his instrument at the Great Exhibition (Levien 1942:16), and '...his fine performances aroused considerable enthusiasm...' (Mansfield 1918:215).

Willis's organ represented a new type of instrument, and it required a new kind of player to exploit its possibilities to the fullest extent. Willis had remarked that Best '...was perfectly familiar with my pistons, stop arrangements etc...' (MT 1st May 1898), and it is clear that he had developed a new approach to the playing of the instrument. Some idea of how Best made use of the possibilities offered by this new type of instrument can be gained from his transcription of the overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Best published this transcription as his opus 3, and therefore it probably dates from the late 1840's. The writing for the keyboard is of a virtuoso nature, and includes the rapid repetition of single notes, which would not have been practicable without the newly-developed pneumatic-lever action. The pedal-part makes use of octave writing, and also of the higher ranges of the pedal-board. The numerous, and rapid changes of registration required by Best would not have been possible without the agency of some new means of stop-control, such as Willis's thumb-pistons. The transcription could not have been played on Hill's instrument at Birmingham Town Hall, for example, because of the heavy touch, lack of registration aids and inadequate compass of the pedals. A new style of writing for, and playing the organ required a new type of instrument.

.....One of the most remarkable of his [Best's] earlier experiments in the transcription of orchestral music for the organ was an extraordinary arrangement of the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*, which I do not think anyone but himself could have played. In this all the orchestral instruments and effects were represented, and (owing to the constant alternations of *forte* and *piano*) the stops were kept flying in and out.....and the hands constantly changing from one keyboard to another, with bewildering rapidity. There is a story that when he [Best] was asked to give a specimen of his powers to.....[Samuel Sebastian] Wesley, then king of the organ world, he selected this *Die Zauberflöte* arrangement, and that Wesley, at the close of the performance, merely said: Ah! you are young!'..... (Statham 1909:224&225)

11

Needs. off. sf Needs. p

Open Disap sf Needs. off. sf Needs. off. sf Needs. off. sf

Full without Reeds. f Full without Reeds. f

3 2 1 2 3 2 3 4 3 2 1 2 Full Sw. Open D. Gl. comp. to Sw.

Or: Die Zauberflöte Arr. by Best.

2080

39. Part of the Overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, transcribed for organ by William Thomas Best, and published as his Op.3, by Novello.

This style of playing the organ provides a sharp contrast to that which was common earlier in the century, as this letter, written by W. T. Best to F. G. Edwards, makes clear:

.....[Thomas] Adams [(1785-1858)] (with enormous contrapuntal talent) regaled himself by serving up one or two of Bach's 48 Fugues.....[footnote] - adding a droning pedal when his unions were propitious. (15th September 1894, BL Eg.3095)

Even S. S. Wesley, an organist of great repute, was not comfortable when playing on the new C-compass pedal-boards:

.....his [Wesley's] powers of execution were unquestionably far inferior [to those of Best]; for one thing, I remember that he looked down at the pedals constantly while playing which no one ever saw Best do.....(Statham 1909:218)

Willis's Exhibition instrument was the first fully-developed concert-organ, and served as the vanguard for the many such instruments which were placed in the Town Halls and Concert Halls of the big towns and cities. Best fully exploited the possibilities inherent in these new instruments. He was to become the greatest organ-player of the 19th century, with a reputation that was world-wide.

POSTLUDE

'EMINENT VICTORIANS'

.....the number of momentous and significant figures that the [Victorian] age produced was nothing short of amazing. Even in art, while we must criticize its results, we must admit that its exponents stood big in their trade and profession. The doctrinaire confidence that is to most of us so unattractive.....made the century the prolific parent of eminent figures.....

(H. & H. J. Massingham 1932:19)

If there is such a thing as the 'Spirit of the Age', the the Great Exhibition of 1851 surely encapsulates that of the early Victorian period. The Exhibition was also a celebration of the enthusiasm, range of interests and capacity for hard work of the individuals involved. Paxton, Cole, Brunel and Willis and others represented a new breed of self-made men, often from humble origins, who by vision, independence of thought, enthusiasm, commitment and hard work, were to shape the developments and destiny of 19th century Britain.

William Thomas Best belongs to this class of self-made men, and by dint of his own application, became the greatest virtuoso organ-player of the 19th century. This was an age of keyboard virtuosity, with pianists such as Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871), and, above all, Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Best's achievements as an organ player may be compared with those of Liszt as a pianist - both pioneered a new style of playing, and writing for, their respective keyboard instruments.

Best showed great independence of thought throughout his life, being completely unimpressed by titles and honours.

.....Legend has it that at the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Duchess of Kent asked Best, who was standing by the organ, 'At what time will the organ play?' Even at that comparatively early age, Best was no diplomat, for he replied politely, but firmly, 'Madame, the organ will be *played* at three-o'-clock..... (Bryson, MO Sept. 1926:1212)

At this early point in his career - Best was twenty-five when he played at the Great Exhibition - he had sufficient confidence in his abilities to ask for a fee of five guineas (no mean sum at the time) for demonstrating Willis's Exhibition organ to the Liverpool Committee.

In addition to becoming a virtuoso performer with a world-wide reputation, Best's career touched key areas of Victorian life and thought, not least in his being a self-made man. As he was to write later '...A man is what he makes himself to be; no less - no more...' (Hollins 1936:168)

PART 2

BEST BEFORE 1855

CHAPTER 5

W. T. BEST'S FAMILY

*.....when William Thomas [Best] first saw the light of day - on the 13th day of August, 1826.....
the only romantic thing about his birth was the fine old city in which the interesting
event occurred. This city was Carlisle.....*

(Mansfield 1918:210)

According to the inscription on his gravestone in Childwall Churchyard, Liverpool, William Thomas Best was born on the 13th of August 1826. He was baptised in the Parish of Stanwix, a village just outside Carlisle, on the 16th September.¹ His father is named as William Best of Carlisle, Attorney at Law, and his mother as Catherine. Of his father's origins, the present writer has been able to discover little, other than that a William Best, bachelor of the Parish of St. Mary, and Catherine Thomas, spinster of the Parish of St. Cuthbert, were married by licence at the Parish Church of St. Mary in Carlisle, on the 6th February 1813.² John Mewburn Levien, in researching for his short book *Impressions of W. T. Best* (London, 1942) commissioned the *Society of Genealogists* to conduct a search into the origins of W. T. Best's parents, but they were able to shed little light on the matter.³ Levien, however, accepted that the marriage which took place on 6th February 1813 was that of W. T. Best's parents, and the present writer has not found any other references to a William Best marrying a Catherine in the County of Cumberland.

It is likely that William Best was not a native of Carlisle. His wife, Catherine, the daughter of Joseph Thomas (a calico glazior) and his wife Ann (née Webster), was baptised at St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle on the 16th October 1791.⁴ Joseph Thomas and Ann Webster had been married by licence at St. Mary's Church on the 12th December 1890.⁵ This information helps to explain the following, from an article in the *Musical Herald*:

.....His [Best's] father was a solicitor and Mrs. Best, née Webster, he believes was related to Daniel Webster, the American orator..... (MH Jan.1890:290)

This information is reiterated by Orlando Mansfield (1918:210), who may have based his information on the above article, but not by Levien (1942:11), who names Catherine Thomas as W. T. Best's mother. It would seem that it was his maternal grandmother who was the Webster, whether or not related to the American orator.

Parish records reveal that there were two other children born to William Best, Attorney at Law, and his wife, Catherine: Mary Anne, baptised at Stanwix on

the 11th August 1822,⁶ and Frederick Warmingham, baptised on the 10th October 1824, also at Stanwix.⁷ It is, of course, possible that there were other children who did not survive infancy.

It may be that the second Christian names of the two sons of William Best provide a clue to his origins. The second son, William, has Thomas, his mother's maiden name, as his second name. As the eldest son's second name, Warmingham, is uncommon as a Christian name it is therefore a possibility that Warmingham was William Best's mother's maiden name.

William Best was in practice as an Attorney in Carlisle. *Pigot & Co.'s Directory of 1828-1829* (page 69) gives his address as Nanson's Lane. The census taken on 7th June 1841 records the family as living in Scotch Street; and describes the family as William Best, Solicitor, aged 45 years; Catherine, aged 40 years; Mary, aged 15 years, Frederick, surgeon's apprentice, aged 15 years; and William, aged 14 years. With the exception of that of William, all the ages given on this census return are inaccurate

The Death of William Best

William Best committed suicide by hanging himself in January 1847, at Scotch Street, in the Parish of St. Mary, Carlisle. He was buried in St. Mary's Churchyard, on January 25th.⁸ His age is given as 68 years on both the Death Certificate and in the Burial Register. This is also confirmed by inscription on the gravestone of his wife and daughter, which adds:

In affectionate remembrance of W. Best Esq. of Carlisle, Attorney at Law, who died January 20th [sic] 1847, aged 68 years, and is interred at St. Mary's Carlisle.

This gravestone, in Stanwix Churchyard, no longer exists [1992], but the inscription was recorded by J. M. Levien, and can be found amongst his notes on W. T. Best, now housed in Liverpool City Library (Hq 920 BES).

The Coroner's Inquest into the death was held on Saturday 23rd January 1847. Both the Inquest Report and the *Carlisle Journal* record the death as having occurred on the previous Thursday, the 21st January, and therefore the Death Certificate and the inscription on his wife's gravestone were inaccurate in giving the date as the 23rd and 20th January respectively. The Report of the Inquest makes grim reading:

Bousefields Lane St Mary
Saturday 23rd Jan[uar]y 1847 -
W[illia]m Best Att[orne]y at Law. 68 y[ear]s

Jury

James Parker Harrison	Foreman
Chris. Park	John Parkins
James Penrice	Jos. Harrison
Geo. Armstrong	Wm. Beaumont
Rob. Robson	William Wilson
Wm. M ^c Adams	Edw. Burney

John Scott

Catherine Best wife of dec[ease]d. On Thursday eve[nin]g he left the sitting room & went up stairs to the school room where there was a fire. [Being?]* absent ab[ou]t 10 minutes or so I went up stairs with a candle & f[oun]d him suspended by a rope from a cupboard door. Dead - Had been very low in his spirits for ? ? ?* & when our son W[illia]m ret[urned] to Liverpool. Dec[ease]d h[a]d been despairing for 12 [months?]* during which time he had withdrawn from [things?]* on acc[oun]t of ill health & the change in the law.

Chris. Park knew Mr. Best[.] Ab[ou]t 6 on Thurs[day] ev[enin]g I rec[eive]d a message from Mrs. Best to come to her house. I immediately went & ran up stairs. She had him lying on the floor quite dead. A rope was round his neck & the other part of the rope was fastened to a peg inside the cupboard door. He has been despairing way for some time.⁹

[* - difficult to decipher the handwriting of the original]

(Cumbria Record Office)

The Inquest, which was held before the County Coroner, W. Carrick Esq., was reported in the *Carlisle Journal* of 30th January 1847:

.....On the 23rd. inst., at Bousfield Lane, Carlisle, on the body of Mr. William Best, attorney-at-law. Deceased had been in low spirits and a desponding state of mind for twelve months. On the previous Thursday evening, he left his sitting room and went into an up stairs room, where he was shortly afterwards followed by his wife who found him suspended by a rope from a cupboard door, quite dead. Verdict - "Insanity".

The Death Certificate also records this verdict, giving the causes of death as 'Suicide by Hanging. Insanity'.¹⁰

would tolerate such a system.

On the subject of Acts of Parliament, and the danger of having them passed without the parties fully considering what they are doing, I wish to ask the trustees of the Cocker-mouth and Maryport turnpike road the following questions, relative to the Branch to the Dearham Collieries:—

It has been stated that when that branch was in contemplation, it was agreed that the expenses of obtaining the act for forming the road, and of keeping it in repair, should be paid out of the tolls of that branch. Now the coal-owners find it better to have no toll-gate near it. The consequence is, that the interest of the money borrowed to pay the above expenses is either unpaid, or it is paid out of tolls belonging to the mortgagees of the old road—who ought not to be thus charged. Which is the case? Answer me this, some of you who were concerned in the job?

A RATE-PAYER

INQUESTS.

(Before W. Carrick, Esq., County Coroner.)

At the Longtown Union Workhouse, on Thursday, the 21st instant, on the body of Thomas Errington, agricultural labourer, aged 78. Deceased had been an out-door pauper, receiving 2s. 6d. weekly relief from the parish of Scalby up till the 18th, three days prior to his decease. He inhabited a miserable sod house in that parish, residing alone for upwards of two years. On the last-named day, Mr. Mulcaster, one of the overseers, visited him at the suggestion of several neighbours, for the purpose of prevailing upon him to go into the workhouse, for his better accommodation, which he consented to do. Mr. Mulcaster took him there in a cart, covering him up in straw, and placing a woollen rug over him. On being received at the workhouse, he was washed in warm water and placed near a fire, and had tea and bread given him, which he took. He was visited, shortly after his arrival, by Mr. Graham, surgeon, who found him suffering from paralysis and extreme debility. He had every attention paid in the workhouse, until the following morning, when he died. Verdict—"Natural death."

On the 28rd inst., at Bousfield Lane, Carlisle, on the body of Mr. William Best, attorney-at-law. Deceased had been in low spirits and a desponding state of mind for twelve months. On the previous Thursday evening, he left his sitting room and went into an up stairs room, where he was shortly afterwards followed by his wife, who found him suspended by a rope from a cupboard door, quite dead. Verdict—"Insanity."

On the same day, at Newtown Rockliff, on the body of Eli-

It is likely that the discrepancy in the age of William Best between the 1841 census and his death six years later (and also that of his wife, Catherine) are the result of a copyists error. All the circumstantial documentary evidence would point to the fact that this was the family of W. T. Best.

Catherine Best and Mary Anne Best

It would appear that Mary Anne Best never married and remained at the family home. She died of acute bronchitis on the 21st December 1859 at the age of thirty-eight, and was buried on Christmas Day at Stanwix.¹¹ Her mother, Catherine, died soon afterwards, on the 29th December, of bronchitis and debility, and was buried on 2nd January 1860, also at Stanwix.¹² Both died at their home in Brown's Lane, Fisher Street, Carlisle, and their deaths were recorded in the *Carlisle Journal* of the 6th January 1860.

Deaths.

In Fisher Street, in this city, on the 20th ult., Mrs. Best, widow of the late William Best, Esq., solicitor, aged 63 years; and on the 21st, Mary Anne, their daughter, aged 38 years.

At No. 25, Milburn Street, on the 1st instant, after a severe illness, John, youngest son of Mr. William Bova, butcher, aged 1 year and 10 months.

In John Street, Botchergate, on the 2nd inst., Mrs. Mary Lowther, aged 38; and on the 4th, in St. Mary's Workhouse, William Hetherington, aged 53 years.

In Duke Street, in this city, on the 27th ult., Ann Morrison, aged 86 years; at Parham Beck, on the 29th, James Doran, aged 60; at the infirmary, on the 30th ult., Richard Morris, aged 44; at Parham Beck, on the 30th, Elizabeth McCully, aged 18 months; at Broad Guards, on the 30th, Mary Ann Irving, aged 26 years; at Half-way Houses, on the 31st, James Anderson, aged 51; in Botchergate, on the 1st inst., Elizabeth Johnston, aged 9 months.

At Carlston, near this city, on the 30th ult., in child-bed, Mary, wife of Mr. Robert Little, and daughter of the late Mr. Richard Forrest, Hill Top, Pantou, near Longtown, aged 33 years,—deeply lamented.

At Easton Hill, on the 3rd inst., John Johnston, mole catcher, aged 67 years,—much respected.

At Kirkbride, on the 31st ult., Frances, only daughter of the late Mr. John Willis, aged 44 years,—much and deservedly respected.

41. *The Carlisle Journal*, 6th January 1860.

The inscription on their gravestone at Stanwix read as follows:

In affectionate remembrance of W. Best Esq. of Carlisle, Attorney at Law, who died January 20th [sic] 1847, aged 68 years, and is interred at St. Mary's Carlisle.

Also of Catherine his wife who died December 29th 1859, aged 65 years.

Also Mary Anne their daughter who died December 21st 1859, aged 38 years.

It is worth noting that there is a slight discrepancy in the age of Catherine Best; she was baptised in 1791, and presumably born in that year, which would have made her sixty-eight years old at the time of her death. It is quite likely that at this time people were less concerned about strict accuracy of their ages on official documents.

It can be seen from the Death Certificates of both women that F. W. Best (or just possibly T. W. Best) was present at their death. The likelihood is that it was Frederick Warmingham Best in view of the fact that he was still living in Fisher Street, Carlisle, and was granted Letters of Administration over his mother's estate on the 1st February 1860.¹³

Frederick Warmingham Best

Frederick Warmingham Best, the surgeon's apprentice of the 1841 census, qualified as a doctor. The *Medical Directory* of 1860 has, under his entry:

Fisher St., Carlisle; L.S.A. Eng 1858¹⁴

and that for 1861:

55, Castle Street., Carlisle; L.F.P.S. Glasg. and L.M. 1860, L.S.A. 1858
Leeds¹⁴

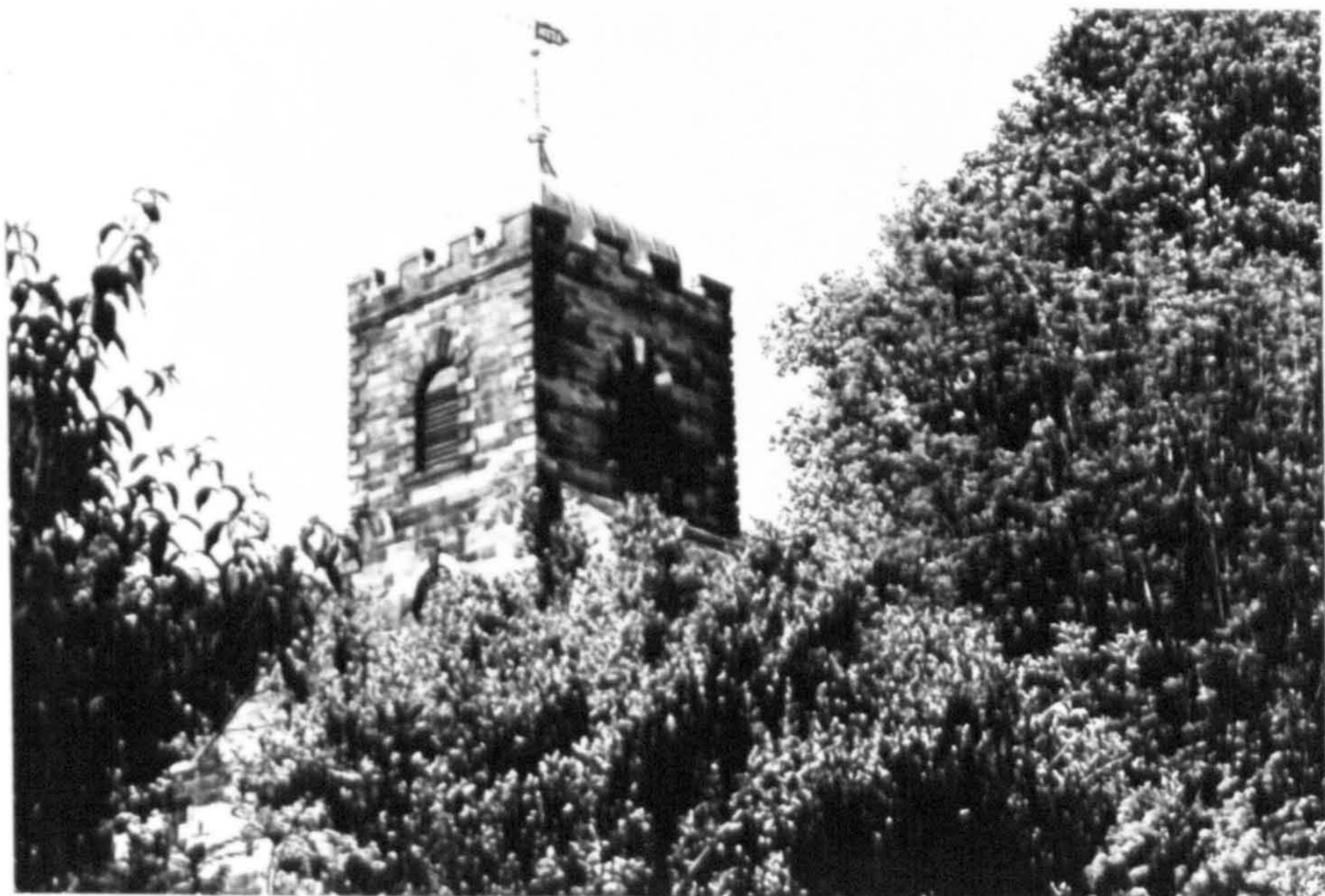
The census of the 7th April 1861, lists him as an unmarried lodger of forty years of age, living at 8, Castle Street, Carlisle and practising as a surgeon. His qualifications are listed as:

Licentiate of [the] Faculty of Physicians, Glasgow.
Licentiate in Midwifery, Glasgow.
Licentiate of Apothecaries Hall, London.

The *Medical Directory* of 1862 has F. W. Best living at Stamingley (ammended in later editions to Stanningley), mid-way between Bradford and Leeds, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. In 1863 he is also listed as a Fellow of Obstetricians Society, London, and in 1875 as a Member of the British Medical Association.¹⁴ On 24th June 1875 he married Sarah Ann Geldart, a 40-year-old widow, who died two years later of bronchitis.¹⁵ Frederick Best died on the 15th December 1878.¹⁶

William Thomas Best

The early life and career of the younger son of William and Catherine Best is outlined in the following chapter.



42. *St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle, where W. T. Best's mother was baptised.*

[Photograph by R. D. Tebbet]



43. *Carlisle Cathedral, where W. T. Best's maternal grandparents, and also his parents were married, and where William Best was buried. At this time the congregation of St. Mary's used the nave of the Cathedral for their worship.*



44. *The churchyard at Stanwix were W. T. Best's mother and sister were buried.*
[Photographs by R. D. Tebbet]



45. Scotch Street, Carlisle, where the Best family were living at the time of the 1841 census, and where William Best committed suicide in 1847.



*46. 8, Castle Street, Carlisle, where F. W. Best was lodging in 1861.
[Photographs by R. D. Tebbet]*

[original in colour]



*Carlisle Market Cross from English Street, 1835, by W. H. Nutter (1819-1872)
[Carlisle Museum & Art Gallery Collection]*

CHAPTER 6

THE EARLY CAREER OF W. T. BEST

.....Master Best's performance on the piano.....was truly wonderful.....
(The Carlisle Journal, 6th March 1841)

Details of the early musical career of W. T. Best are scarce. Perhaps he acquired his love for the organ in the manner suggested in the *Musical Herald*:

.....The ancient cathedral [of Carlisle] was the centre of musical light, then, as now, the citizens repaired on Sunday afternoons to hear the anthem and the organ, and here Mr. Best received his first musical impulses..... (MH Jan. 1890:290)

This article suggests that both W. T. Best's mother and sister were musical, and Levien (1942:12) states that Best had his first music lessons from his sister Mary Anne. It is interesting to note that 'Miss. M. A. Best [of] Carlisle' was one of the subscribers to Best's edition of Handel's *Six Organ Concertos* (for organ solo) published by Novello in 1858. However, by 1841, when the young W. T. Best made what was probably his first public performance, as a pianist, he was a pupil of a Mr. Young.

The *Carlisle Journal* of the 27th February carried an advertisement for a 'Charity Concert under the patronage of the Mayor of Carlisle', which was in aid of the soup charity. Among the performers was Master Best.

CHARITY CONCERT.
UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE MAYOR OF
CARLISLE.
A GRAND CONCERT will be given in
the ATHENÆUM EXHIBITION ROOM,
on TUESDAY Evening, the 2nd of MARCH, in AID of
the SOUP CHARITY, by
The Orchestral Band of the Philharmonic Society—
led by Mr. ORBE.
The Brass Band of the Rechabites—led by Mr.
CARTER.
Vocalists—Messrs. J. INGHAM, COATES, HARRIS,
WYLLIE, &c.
Instrumental Solo Performers—Mr. R. ROBINSON,
Master BEST, &c., &c., &c.
Tickets must be purchased beforehand of the
Booksellers.
FRONT SEATS, 3s. 6d.; BACK SEATS, 2s.
Books of Words, 3d. each.
For full particulars see Programme and Circulars.

48. *The Carlisle Journal*, 27th February 1841.

The *Carlisle Journal* of the 6th March published the following review of Best's performance:

.....Master Best's performance on the piano (a most wretched one by the by) was truly wonderful, and reflects the highest credit on his own industry, and on his teacher, Mr. Young.....

Best played *National Air: 'Rule Britannia' with brilliant variations* by Friedrich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner (1784-1849) as a solo, and *Two Airs from 'The Barber of Seville'* by Rossini (1792-1868) as a duet with his teacher (Levien - unpublished notes, Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES).

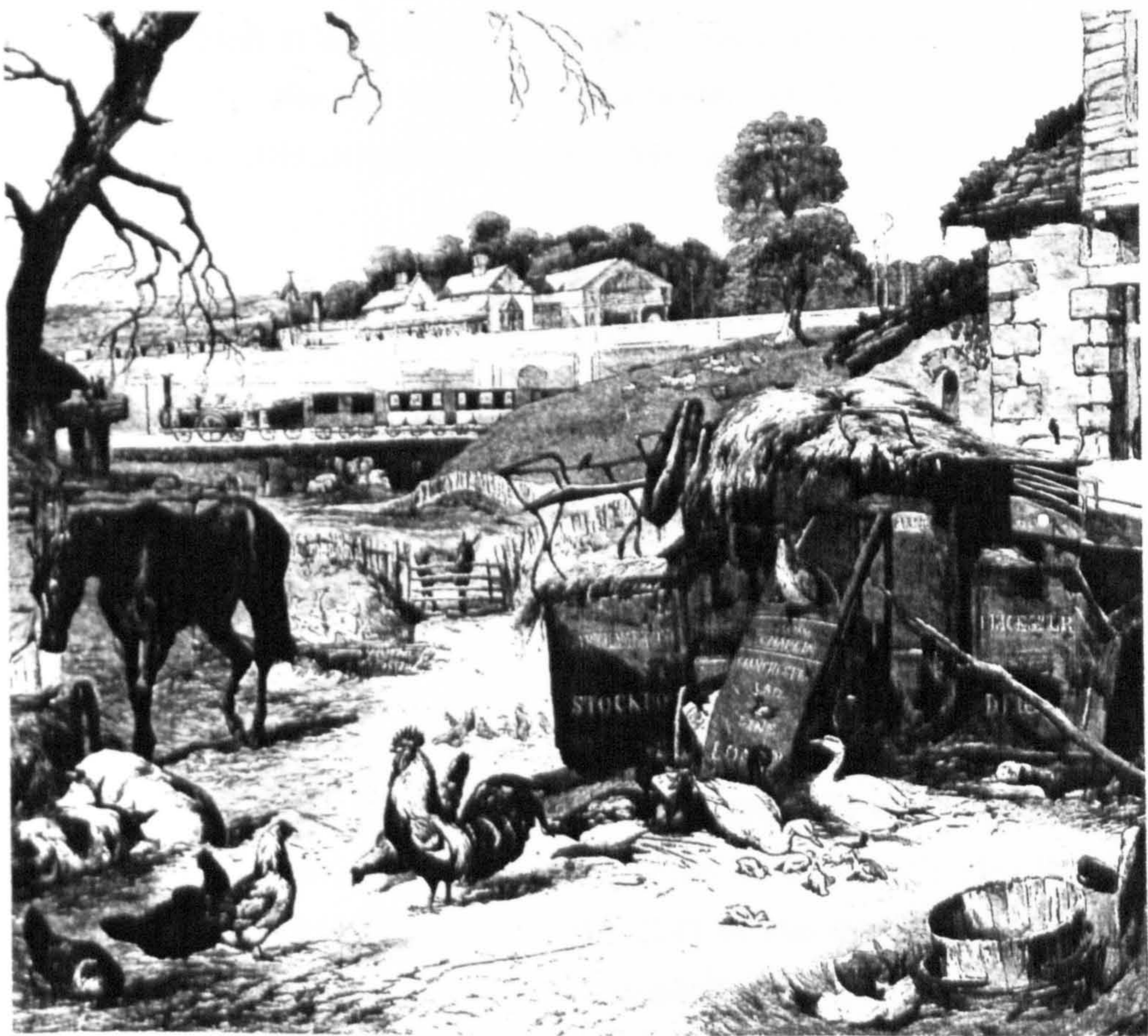
This teacher, Abraham Young, has been variously described as '...occasional assistant at the cathedral...' (Levien 1942:12&13), '...assistant organist at the cathedral...' (Carr 1951:9) and '...organist of the cathedral...' (MH Jan. 1890:290). What is certain is that Young was not organist of Carlisle Cathedral at this time, the post having been held by Richard Ingham (1833-1841) and James Stimpson (1841-1842), who was then succeeded by Dr. H. E. Ford. Mansfield (1918:210&211) offers another theory:

.....nearly all the records of his [Best's] life stating that he studied organ under Young, the cathedral organist. But no one of that name is known in the musical chronicles of Carlisle Cathedral.....Mr. Stratton is the only historian who does not endorse the Young legend. In his obituary notice of Best, in the *Monthly Musical Record* of June, 1897, he states that Best took lessons from one John Norman, a deputy organist of Carlisle Cathedral.....

What is clear is that Best had a *piano* teacher called Young, and it was as a *pianist* that he performed at the Charity Concert in 1841. He may also have received instruction on the organ from Young or Norman, but there are reasons which suggest that he did not receive tuition on that instrument while still living in Carlisle. If Best's piano teacher did have a connection with the Cathedral, it may have been that he merely deputised occasionally. It is also possible that Young had some connection with the Parish of St. Mary, Carlisle, whose congregation used the nave of the Cathedral for their services. Levien (1942:13) describes Young as '...a bit of a Bohemian and wore a very long frock-coat...'.

The Charity Concert on Tuesday evening, in the Exhibition room of the Athenæum, went off with the greatest spirit, and evidently to the highest satisfaction of a respectable, if not numerous audience. Although the quantity and variety of material rendered the concert of great length, not a symptom of weariness was perceived in a single individual; and from all we can learn it is generally considered, of all concerts hitherto given by the Philharmonic Society, to have most nearly fulfilled the real purposes of music, viz:— invigorating and exhilarating the spirits, and diffusing over the feelings that complacency and good humour, which is so nearly allied in its effects to benevolence and humanity. Throughout the whole performances, both vocal and instrumental, there appeared to us to be a careful attention to the nature and purpose of the music. Spirit, fire, animation, gaiety, and comic fun, on the one hand, and gloom, awe, fear, and terror, on the other, were each and all displayed in their appropriate places. Where all was good, it is difficult to select; but, we may remark that the vocal department, though in few hands, was an immense improvement on what has frequently been given in Carlisle. Mr. James Ingham and Mr. Coates made their vocal *debut* on this occasion, and excellent voices they both have. We should think the latter gentleman would be improved by a little drilling in the *elocution* of music; and in the important, though simple process of opening the mouth, well. To us, there appeared once or twice, in both, some slight symptoms of the over-calmness and solemnity of the cathedral school; but this entirely disappeared in the comic songs, and the catch “Would you know my Ceilia’s charms” was a master-piece. Its effect was most materially aided by the real excitement of Mr. Orre, whose enthusiasm carried him into the very essence of the subject, and so successful a piece of self-forgetfulness we never saw before. This piece was deservedly encored. Master Wyllie, although long known in Carlisle, by his once sweet treble voice, may also be said to have made his *debut* on Tuesday, in a very effective tenor song. With proper management, it is probable he will still ~~show a new compass, and he exhibited~~ ~~marks of considerable power, but not always~~ correct intonation. Mr. Robinson performed with great brilliancy some beautiful waltzes composed by him for the occasion, though apparently subject to the most harassing of all besetments to a flute player, nervousness; he was, however, so warmly received, that he volunteered the beautiful Irish melody “Coolun,” amidst great applause. Master Bes’s performance on the piano, (a most wretched one by the by) was truly wonderful, and reflects the highest credit on his own industry, and on his teacher, Mr. Young. Why cannot the society provide better pianos on these occasions? at best it is a poor instrument in a large and sounding room, and a bad one is intolerable. The Rechabite Band came out in full costume, and presented a real novelty in the concert room. Their playing, though too loud for the room, was very extraordinary, considering the short term of their existence, and their reception must have been felt very gratifying to Mr. Carter. The overtures, &c. performed by the Philharmonic Band justified the character they acquired last year for this species of music, and were throughout almost as near perfection, considering

W. T. Best was originally intended for a career in civil engineering, not music, but '...A few months' work on the plans of one of the pioneer railways was sufficient to dissuade him...' (MH Jan.1890:290). This was the time of the great expansion of the railway network in England, which transformed the country and revolutionised communications.



50. Chromolithograph c1841-1845 by Henry Alken, showing the changes which were taking place in transportation at this time.

The Move to Liverpool

At some point in the early 1840's W. T. Best was sent from Carlisle to Liverpool, possibly to continue his studies in civil engineering and architecture (Levien 1942:13). Carr (1951:9), Levien (1942:13) and Mansfield (1918:211) imply that Best was already resident in Liverpool in 1840, and although this is possible, he was in Carlisle in 1841 on both 2nd March (the date of the Charity Concert) and 7th June (the date of the census). It may be the case that he had already moved to Liverpool, and returned to Carlisle on these dates, but it is more likely that the move took place later in 1841.

Although we have no record of how Best travelled to Liverpool, it may well have been by sea. At this time there were regular sailings from Port Carlisle to Liverpool advertised in the *Carlisle Journal*. There was a rail link between Carlisle and Newcastle, but not south to Manchester (Dodds 1953:224). Carlisle had not yet become an important railway centre (MH Jan.1890:290).

It has been suggested that Best stayed with relatives in Liverpool. Levien (1942:13) maintains that he stayed with his mother's brother in London Road, whereas Carr (1951:9) that he stayed with a relative of his father, as there was a grocer of the name of Joseph Best at 133 London Road. The present writer has been unable to find evidence to support either view.

Just as the exact date at which Best moved to Liverpool is unclear, so is the age at which he started to learn to play the organ. Levien (1942:12/MMR Sept.1939:196) states quite clearly that Best began to play the organ in Carlisle, and at the Cathedral. Mansfield's account (1918:214) of the first meeting between Best and Dr. H. E. Ford, Organist of Carlisle Cathedral from 1842 to 1902, would seem to imply that Best was not familiar with the Cathedral instrument until 1842, after he had moved to Liverpool.¹ However, what is clear, is that at some point in the early 1840's Best began a serious study of the organ.



ALTERATION IN STARTING THE TRAINS.

NEWCASTLE AND CARLISLE RAILWAY.

On and after Monday, March 12th, 1838, the Company's Trains will start as follows, until further Notice.

GOING WEST THROUGH THE WEEK.

TRAINS.	From No. 30, Westgate-Street, by Omnibus.	From No. 86, Close, by Steam-boat.	From Redheugh.	From Blaydon.	From Hexham.	From Haydon Bridge.	From Greenhead.	For
A Short Train.....							past 8 m.	Carlisle.
A Thorough Train....	7 o'clock m.	7 o'clock m.	past 7	before 8	9 o'clock	past 9	past 11	Do.
A Short Train.....	11 ... m.	11 ... m.	past 11	before 12	1 o'clock			Haydn Bridge
A Thorough Train....	2 Aftern.	2 Aftern.	past 2	before 3	4 o'clock	past 4	past 6	Carlisle.
A Short Train.....	8 ...	8 ...	past 8	before 7	8 o'clock			Haydn Bridge

GOING WEST ON SUNDAYS.

A Short Train.....							past 8 m.	Carlisle.
A Thorough Train....	8 o'clock m.	8 o'clock m.	past 8	before 9	10 o'clock	1 o'clock	3 o'clock	Do.
A Short Train.....	3 Aftern.	3 o'clock	past 3	before 6	7 o'clock			Haydn Bridge

GOING EAST THROUGH THE WEEK.

	From Carlisle.	From Greenhead.	From Haydon Bridge.	From Hexham.	From Blaydon.	For
A Short Train.....			past 7 m.	before 8	9 o'clock	Newcastle.
A Thorough Train....	7 o'clock m.	past 8	past 10	before 11	12 o'clock	Do.
A Short Train.....			past 2 Af.	before 3	4 o'clock	Do.
A Thorough Train....	2 Aftern.	past 3	past 5	before 6	7 o'clock	Do.
A Short Train.....	past 6					Greenhead.

GOING EAST ON SUNDAYS.

A Short Train.....			bet. 8 m.	past 9	past 9	Newcastle.
A Thorough Train....	9 o'clock m.	1 o'clock.	past 3 Af.	before 4	7 o'clock	Do.
A Short Train.....	3 o'clock					Greenhead.

N.B.—The Omnibus will proceed from Blaydon, on the Arrival of the respective Trains from the West, to No. 30, Westgate-Street, Newcastle, as heretofore.

GOODS CONVEYED WITH SAFETY AND DISPATCH.

Railway Office, 67, Close, Newcastle, 7th March, 1838.

STEAM COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PORT CARLISLE, ANNAN WATERFOOT, AND LIVERPOOL.

THE CARLISLE, ANNAN, and LIVERPOOL STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY'S

ROYAL VICTORIA,

JOHN HUDSON, Commander.

Measuring 450 Tons, Coppered and Copper-fastened.

Will Sail from LIVERPOOL, PORT CARLISLE, and ANNAN WATERFOOT, at the undermentioned times, calling off WHITEHAVEN (Weather permitting) to land and receive Passengers.

FROM LIVERPOOL

FROM PORT CARLISLE & ANNAN WATERFOOT

MARCH.

MARCH.

Monday, 26th March, at 10 o'Clock Night

Saturday, 24th March, at 9 o'Clock Forenoon

Thursday, 29th March, at 12 o'Clock Midnight

Wednesday, 29th March, at 12 o'Clock Noon

Saturday, 31st March, at 2 o'Clock Afternoon

APRIL.

APRIL.

Wednesday, 4th April, at 8 o'Clock Evening

Saturday, 7th April, at 9 o'Clock Morning

Monday, 6th April, at 10 o'Clock Night

Wednesday, 11th April, at 11 o'Clock Forenoon

Thursday, 12th April, at 11 o'Clock Night

Saturday, 14th April, at 1 o'Clock Afternoon

Tuesday, 17th April, at 9 o'Clock Morning

Friday, 20th April, at 7 o'Clock Morning

Monday, 23rd April, at 9 o'Clock Night

Wednesday, 25th April, at 11 o'Clock Forenoon

Thursday, 26th April, at 11 o'Clock Night

Saturday, 28th April, at 1 o'Clock Afternoon

The Carlisle Canal Company's swift Iron Boat, "THE ARROW," will attend the time of the Arrival and Sailing of the above Vessel, to convey the Passengers between Carlisle and Port Carlisle.

Conveyances can be had at Mr. BENSON'S Queensbury Arms Inn, Annan, to forward Passengers to Dumfries; and at Mr. ANDREW CLARK'S, George Inn, Dumfries, to forward Passengers to the Vessel.

FARES.

From Liverpool to Whitehaven, and vice versa—Cabin, 10s.; Deck, 4s.

From Whitehaven to Port Carlisle and Annan Waterfoot, and vice versa—Cabin 6s.; Deck 4s.

From Liverpool to Port Carlisle, and Annan Waterfoot, and vice versa—Cabin 10s.; Deck 4s.

Best's '...rigid course of self-study...'

It is possible that Best first had organ lessons from a blind organist in Liverpool (MH Jan.1890:290). After this he would appear to have studied with John Richardson, Organist of St. Nicholas' Church, the Roman Catholic pro-cathedral of the city (Mansfield 1918:213) and, for a time, of the Old Choral Society (Argent 1889:7). As well as being an organist, Richardson was a composer, his output including hymn tunes (*Tichfield* and *St. Bernard*) and a cantata *The Passions*, which was performed by the Old Choral Society in a concert in March 1845 (Argent 1889:8). Richardson has been variously described as '...a clever musician and a first-rate player...' (Argent 1889:7), and '...a celebrated teacher...' (Carr 1951:9). What was, perhaps, of the greatest importance, was that Richardson was an ardent advocate of the new CC compass pedal-board (Mansfield 1918:213). Levien, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (14th August 1926), mentions the name of another teacher - Edmund Platt.

Most writers have stressed the amount of work Best did for himself '...He passed through no conservatoire training; and, with the exception of a short course of lessons in his boyhood, he was no one's pupil but his own... (Statham 1909:244). It must have been at this time that Best decided to make a career in music, and to abandon the study of civil engineering and architecture. He embarked upon what W. H. Husk called his '...rigid course of self-study...' (Mansfield 1918:213). He worked at the organ and '...practised assiduously to perfect himself in organ playing in all its branches...' (Levien 1942:13). He also studied the piano, spending two years practising nothing but technical exercises (MH Jan.1890:290). Best regarded a thorough grounding in piano technique and the theory of music as an essential prerequisite for anyone wishing to play the organ.² In addition to his studies, Best took up appointments as organist.

Pembroke Road Baptist Chapel, Liverpool

At some time in the early 1840's Best was appointed organist at Pembroke Road Baptist Chapel, Liverpool. The date is generally given as 1840 (Levien 1942:13, Mansfield 1918:211 and Carr 1951:9), but this is unlikely, in view of the

fact that Best may still have been living in Carlisle at that time. When Best first met Dr. Ford, the Organist of Carlisle Cathedral, he told him that he '...had just become organist of Pembroke Road Chapel, Liverpool...' (Mansfield 1918:214). As Ford came to Carlisle Cathedral in 1842, it seems likely that Best's Liverpool appointment was in that year, or even later.

The Baptist Chapel was situated in Pembroke Place, then a suburb of Liverpool, and close to London Road where Best may have been living. The foundation stone had been laid on the 11th June 1838, and the Chapel opened in 1840. It was a fashionable church, attended by important Liverpool families, including the Croppers, of the mercantile house of Cropper, Benson & Co.. The organ was built by the Liverpool firm of Bewsher & Fleetwood. It would seem that such a fine and expensive organ was something of a luxury for a Baptist Chapel at this time (Sellars nd:5). The organ had a CC compass pedal-board (Levien 1942:13, Mansfield 1918:211), and this, coupled with John Richardson's advocacy of such pedal-boards, gave Best the opportunity to develop a very fine pedal technique, at a time when this type of pedal-board was something of a novelty. Best's diligence and dedication in long hours of practice, gave rise to stories that '...he spent all his hours at the organ, and that the bones of mutton chops were to be found among the pedals...' (MH Jan.1890:290). At some point in the late 1840's, possibly 1847, Best gave up his post at Pembroke Chapel in order to take up a similar appointment at the Liverpool Church for the Blind.

The Church for the Blind, Liverpool

This church was founded in 1791 by Edward Rushton (1756–1814), who had been apprenticed to a firm of West India shippers at Liverpool. Whilst serving as mate in a slaving expedition to the Guinea coast he lost his sight; but it was restored in 1807. Rushton published a poem condemning the American war in 1782, kept a tavern in Liverpool, edited the *Liverpool Herald*, and published political writings. His son (also Edward) began his career as a printer and stationer, was called to the bar, and became Stipendiary Magistrate at Liverpool in 1839. His son, William Lowes Rushton, was Best's friend and contemporary, and it is possible that the family influenced Best to accept the post at the church (Carr 1951:9).

There is a rather charming anecdote from Best's time at the Church for the Blind:

.....When he [Best] was organist at the Church for the Blind in Liverpool, a girl came to have her voice tried for the choir. She brought with her a hymn book, and Best.....began looking through it for the most suitable hymn for her to sing. She, however, hearing the leaves move, thought he was turning them for another purpose and said, 'I think you will find some tunes that are easy to play at the end, Mr. Best'. In a quite normally pleasant voice he just replied, 'Oh, I think I could play any of these.....(Levien 1942:39)

The Liverpool Philharmonic Society

In 1846, W. T. Best's name first appears as organist, jointly with William Sudlow, in the programme of a concert given by the Liverpool Philharmonic Society on the 27th August, and in 1848 he was appointed Organist of the Society.

Principal Vocal Performers.

Madame ANAÏDE CASTELLAN, Signora CORBARI,
Signor MARRAS and Signor FORNASARI.

Instrumental Performers.

Violoncello..... Monsieur KELLERMANN.
Piano Forte.....Signor ORSINI.

ORCHESTRA.

VIOLINS.	VIOLONCELLOS.	CLARINETTS.
Mr. H. F. ALDRIDGE,	Mr. R. DAVIES,	Mr. BORG, Jun.
Mr. G. R. BERGMANN,	Mr. HADDOCK,	Mr. JOLLIFFE
Mr. W. S. LITTLE,	Mr. J. TIVENDELL,	BASSOONS.
Mr. G. EYTON,	Mr. BOGERS,	Mr. BÜRNER,
Mr. H. W. SURROWER,	DOUBLE BASSES.	Mr. FARMER.
Mr. HIRST,	Mr. E. TAYLOR,	HORN.
Mr. FERGUSON,	Mr. EDGAR,	Mr. EDWARDS,
Mr. CRIBBIN,	Mr. DYER,	Mr. BARNIE, Sn.
Mr. VAN GRUBEN,	Mr. WOODWARD.	TRUMPETS.
Mr. S. WEALE,	FLUTES.	Mr. PHILLIPS,
Mr. G. CHRISTIAN,	ANATHURA.	Mr. BRADSHAW.
Mr. BOBSON,	OBOES.	TRUMPETS.
And ANATHURA		Mr. BOBERT,
VIOLAS,		And others.
Mr. G. WILBERFORCE,	Mr. BORG,	DRUM.
and others,	Mr. CAFFRATA.	Mr. FILLER,
		Mr. J. MILLER.

LEADER,

Mr. H. F. ALDRIDGE.

ORGANISTS,

Mr. WILLIAM SUDLOW, Mr. W. T. BEST.

DIRECTOR,

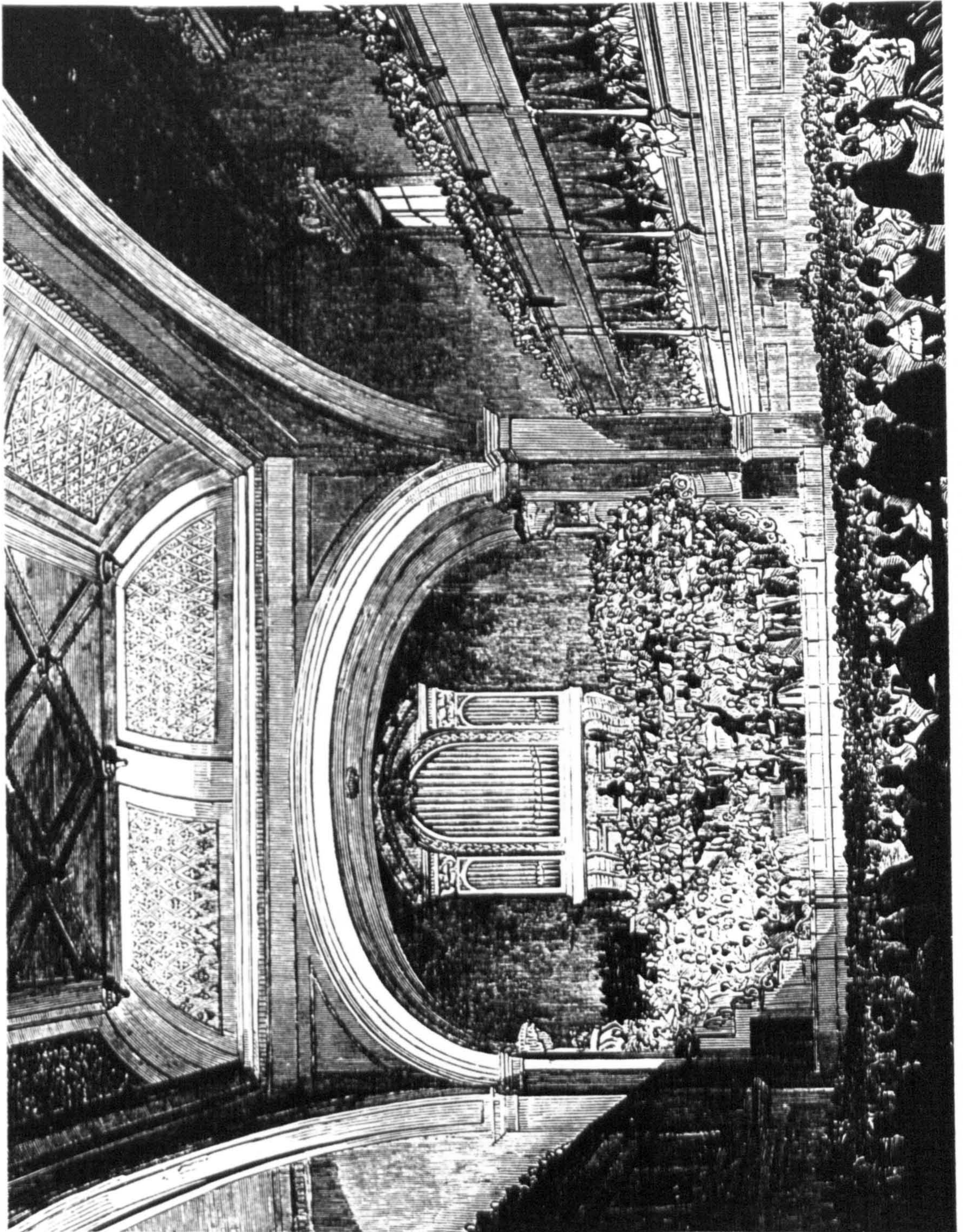
Mr. J. ZEUGHEER HERRMANN.

*52. Programme for the Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert on 27th August 1846.
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]*

In 1849, the new Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool was opened. It was this hall which was later described by Hans Richter as '...the finest concert room in Europe...'. The opening was celebrated by a week long festival of music. Mendelssohn had originally been engaged to conduct, but his untimely death before the event resulted in the conducting being shared by Julius Benedict and Zeugheer Hermann. The singers included Mario, Alboni, Grisi, Lablache, Sims Reeves and Viardot Garcia; the instrumentalists, Hallé, Piatti and Bottesini, with W. T. Best at the organ (Scholes 1947:213). Of Best's performances, *The Times* wrote '...on each occasion [he] has eminently distinguished himself. His execution is finished, and his style belongs to the right school...'

When the Philharmonic Society moved to this new hall they brought with them their existing organ from the Collegiate Institution. The instrument had been built by Bewsher & Fleetwood, and had been used mainly to accompany the choir in choral performances, and not for solo purposes (Roberts 1931:130&131). The instrument would appear to have been of poor quality and was described as '...a wonder to all right-thinking musical minds...' (Argent 1889:23). Best facetiously referred to it as the '...whited sepulchre...' (Watson 1922:328); a reference to the organ-case. At a rehearsal, when Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) asked Best who had built the organ, he replied '...a joiner, I think...' (Levien 1942:14).

In spite of these disadvantages Best seems to have seized every opportunity to contribute organ solos at Philharmonic Society concerts, as well as playing in the choral and orchestral performances. His performances at a concert on the 10th December 1849 were criticised in the *Musical World* (vol.xxiv 15th December 1849:794) as being those of '...a young man of talent, though rather too fond of sacrificing the composer's ideas to his own facility...'. Best's reply was probably the first of many elegantly phrased retorts to criticism.



*53. The opening of the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool.
[Illustrated London News, 1st September 1849]
The young W. T. Best was the organist on this occasion.*

PRINCIPAL VOCAL PERFORMERS.

Madame GRISI, Mademoiselle ALBONI,
Madame VIARDOT GARCIA,
Mademoiselle CORBARI, Mademoiselle L. CORBARI,
Miss A. WILLIAMS, Miss M. WILLIAMS,
Mademoiselle JETTY DE TREFFZ,
Signor MARIO,
Signor LABLACHE, Signor BARTOLINI,
Signor POLONINI, Signor TAGLIAFICO,
AND
Herr CARL FORMES.

SOLO INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMERS.

VIOLIN Herr ERNST.
PIANO FORTE . . . Mr. HALLÉ and Mr. JULES BENEDICT.
FRENCH HORN . . Monsieur VIVIER.
CONDUCTOR Mr. J. ZEUGHEER HERRMANN.
ORGANIST Mr. W. T. BEST.

*54. Opening of the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool.
Grand Miscellaneous Concert, Tuesday 28th August 1849.
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]*

6

ΑΥΑΡΗΗ !

Liverpool 28 Aug: 1849

J. Coghlan

Liverpool 28 Aug: 1849

E. Polverini

Liverpool 31st Aug: 1849

Wm. J. Fresh

Wm. J. Fresh

August 31st
1849

Liverpool 21 Sept - Bartolini

Liverpool 31st August

Jules Benedict } conductor
James Lengheer }

Liverpool August 31st
William J. Fresh
Organist.

55. The Liverpool Philharmonic Society's Autograph Book.
The Grand Miscellaneous Concert, 31st August 1849.
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]

[To the Editor of the *Musical World*]

SIR - I enclose for review at your earliest convenience a Cathedral Service, Tarantella, Three Preludes and Fugues, and a late work of mine, Arrangements, &c., for the Organ.

I have been surprised to observe, in one of your numbers, an extraordinary remark respecting the manner in which I played the organ at the Philharmonic church performance. Rest assured, Sir, that I claim no acquaintance with those musicians whose facility leads them to vary the text of the composer by the introduction of embellishments, &c., or any other meretricious additions.

I hope you will consider the enclosed works a sufficient answer to the ignorant remarks of your Liverpool Correspondent.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

W. T. BEST

Organist of the Church for the Blind;
also, Organist of the Philharmonic
Society, Liverpool.

(MW vol.xxiv Dec.1849:829)

At the tenth concert of the season, on Tuesday 17th December 1850, Best, on the pianoforte, played the third clavier part of J. S. Bach's *Concerto for Three Claviers*, the other pianists being Charles Edward Horsley and Benjamin R. Isaac. What is interesting is that the programme implies that only single strings were used in this performance. Best's signature can be seen along with those of the other pianists and the conductor, in the Liverpool Philharmonic Society's Autograph Book.

Best's reputation as a solo organist was also beginning to grow, the *Musical Times* for the 1st August 1850 reported that:

.....Mr. W. T. Best, organist of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, performed on the new organ built for the church at Lee, in Kent, at the factory of Mr. Bishop, in Lisson Grove. The selection was from the works of Handel, Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Weber, Rink etc. and Mr. Best's manner of using the instrument gave much satisfaction to a large audience, including many professors.....

CONCERTO IN C MAJOR,

By JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH,

FOR THREE PIANO FORTES, WITH STRING ACCOMPANIMENT.

FIRST PIANO FORTE.....Mr. CHAS. EDWD. HORSLEY.

SECOND PIANO FORTEMr. BENJAMIN R. ISAAC.

THIRD PIANO FORTEMr. WILLIAM T. BEST.

FIRST VIOLIN.....Mr. EDWARD W. THOMAS.

SECOND VIOLIN....Mr. CHARLES B. HERRMANN.

VIOLAMr. BAETENS.

VIOLONCELLOMr. HADDOCK.

DOUBLE BASSMr. WAUD.

56. Concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 17th December 1850.

17th December 1850.
W. Stockhausen.

Chas. Edwd. Horsley
B. R. Isaac
William T. Best.

57. The Autograph Book of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society for 17th December 1850 [Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]

Composer, Arranger and Editor

It was not only as an organist and pianist but also as a composer, editor and arranger that Best's reputation was growing. His *Fantasia in E flat* Op.1 for organ 'respectfully dedicated to S. S. Wesley Esqre. Mus. Doc.' was published by Novello in 1845, and 1848 saw the publication of the *Grand Mouvement de Danse* Op.4 for pianoforte. Ambitious arrangements for the organ begin to appear in manuscript at this time.

The Liverpool Philharmonic Society gave performances of his choral pieces. 1850 saw performances of the chorus *Shall e'er my heart find peace on earth* (9th April) and the 4-part song *Harvest Home* (8th October). Best was also writing music for the church. The Anthem *Almighty God giue us grace* for 8-part choir and organ was written between September 30th and October 4th 1848 (MS Liverpool City Library Dq 1472). A motet for three choirs *O Praise the Lord* Op.20 also dates from this time. *Eighty Chorales - Psalm and Hymn Tunes* 'newly harmonised in four parts with organ accompaniment by W. T. Best' was published by Hime of Liverpool in 1848. In a different ecclesiastical context, the manuscript of *Gregorian Services to the Canticles*, is dated 26th August 1850 (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476).

There is also the manuscript of a projected theoretical work entitled *Practical Composition* which is dated April 1851 (Liverpool City Library Dq 1475). This consists of *Part 1st - Counterpoint*, containing examples of counterpoint in up to 8-parts, together with imitation, and a Canon 4 in 2 - in the octave. This work was never published, and there is no evidence that Best wrote any more than what can be found in the manuscript.

A FANTASIA
 FOR THE
 Organ.
 With Pedal obligato.
 COMPOSED & RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
 TO
 S. S. Wesley Esq^r. Mus. Doc.
 BY
 W. T. BEST.
 OP. 1.

Ent. Str. Hall. *Reduced Price 1/6*

London & New York
 NOVELLO, EWER & CO

58. Fantasia for Organ Op.1 by W. T. Best [Novello]

A handwritten musical score for organ, consisting of multiple staves. The notation is dense and complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic values, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. There are several large, sweeping lines that encompass multiple staves, suggesting a grand staff or a multi-voice texture. Dynamic markings are present, including 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'Sforz.' (sforzando). The handwriting is clear and legible, typical of a composer's manuscript. The score is arranged in a vertical orientation on the page.

59. *Andante con moto* from Beethoven's 5th Symphony. Manuscript of W. T. Best's arrangement for organ, dated 9th October 1848 [Liverpool City Library Dq1474]

PART I.

Beethoven's SYMPHONY in C. MINOR.

ALLEGRO CON BRIO.
ANDANTE CON MOTO.
SCHERZO.
FINALE ALLEGRO.

CHORUS..... *Best.*

Shall e'er my heart find peace on earth,
Or in the earth's cold bosom ;
Within the arms of love below,
Or in the realms above us.
That would my spirit solve and know
Ere life on earth shall cease to flow.

60. Concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 9th April 1850

177

FOUR PART SONG . . "Harvest Home." . . *W. T. Best.*

Our wealth is not of dismal mines,
Or from the newly vaunted west,
But golden grain which burnished shines
With bearded pride and nodding crest ;
And as we count this wealth in store,
We spread the news from shore to shore :
When wagons creak, and golden grain
Rustles along the shady lane,
Heigh ! for the harvest home !

The reapers reap with earnest will,
And all the golden spears are lower'd,
As if the sun they worshipp'd still,
And mutely thus in death adored ;
For nature oftentimes we see
Mimics such blind idolatry !
The wagons creak, and golden grain
Rustles along o'er hill and plain,
Heigh ! for the harvest home !

AIR..... "Le Prophète."..... *Meyerbeer.*

Miss CATHERINE HAYES.

61. Concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 8th October 1850.
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]

Handwritten musical score for 'Canon 4 in 2 - in the Octave'. The score is written on ten staves. The first two staves are empty. The third staff contains the handwritten title 'Canon 4 in 2 - in the Octave' in cursive. The remaining staves contain musical notation in 4/2 time, featuring a canon in the octave. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and slurs. The score is written in black ink on white paper.

62. 'Canon 4 in 2 - in the octave' from W. T. Best's 'Practical Composition'
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1475]

The Turning Point

By 1851, when, at the age of twenty-five, W. T. Best came to play the Willis organ at the Great Exhibition, he was already established as a solo performer on both the organ and the pianoforte, as a church musician, and as an editor, arranger and composer. It was his playing at the Exhibition, and subsequently for the Committee from Liverpool, which set in motion a chain of events which was to culminate in his achieving the distinction of being the greatest organist of the 19th. century.

1851 marks the turning-point; not only had Best developed his technique to the point where he was able to approach the playing of the organ from a radically new standpoint, but the instrument itself had been developed to the point where such an approach was possible.

CHAPTER 7

W. T. BEST IN LONDON

.....the springtime of his reputation.....

(Musical Opinion, No.211, April 1895:445)

After the close of the Great Exhibition on the 15th October 1851, it seems likely that W. T. Best remained in London. He had ceased to be organist to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society earlier in the year. On Tuesday, 14th January 1851, he had taken part in a performance of Haydn's *Creation*, but by the 29th April, a new organist, George Hirst, had been appointed (Argent 1889:36).

When he settled in London, Best may initially have lived in Princes Street, Cavendish Square. (Levien nd Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES). He was still in demand as a recitalist, the *Musical World* of 17th April 1852 (Vol.xxx, No.16:253) carrying a report of a recital of music by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Graun and Bach that he gave at the Crystal Palace. Advertisements in the musical press at this time testify to Best's growing reputation as composer, editor and arranger. Interest in the work of other composers is demonstrated by his being among the subscribers to the first volume of a collection of anthems by S. S. Wesley. Best was also acknowledged as an expert on organ building, Frederick Davison (of Gray & Davison) having been reported as saying '...Best...knows more about organ building than we builders do...' (Levien nd Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES).

Whatever the exact date of Best's move from Liverpool to London (an article in *The Choir* of August 1926:143 suggested that it may have been as late as 1852), he was soon established there as an all-round musician.

The visit to Spain

Previous writers on Best (Mansfield 1918:215, Levien 1942:19 and Carr 1951:10) have alluded to a visit that he made to Spain in either 1852 or the winter of 1852-3. In doing this, he would have been part of what was a general trend at the time, as many artists and writers travelled to Spain after the *Guerra de la Independencia* - a 'romantic' movement, which reached its climax between 1830 and 1850 (Garrigues 1987).

In 1845, Richard Ford published his *Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home*, the publication of such a detailed and comprehensive book being an indication of the great interest in Spain that there was, at this time, among the English. Ford describes Spanish life and culture in great detail, as well as providing a large amount of useful information for travellers, the whole being written with great wit.¹

No details of Best's visit to Spain have survived. Ian Robertson (editor of the modern edition of Ford's *Handbook*), in a letter to the present writer (4th May 1987), suggests that British visitors to Spain would travel '...overland through France, although some may have sailed to La Coruña, or more likely, Cadiz, as Andalucia was often the goal...'

Levien is the only writer to offer any information at all about Best's Spanish visit:

.....Whilst there [Spain] he [Best] wrote a number of letters to [William Lowes] Rushton who intended to publish them. Unfortunately he died without doing so, and after his death they were destroyed. It is a pity: they would have made interesting reading today. I only remember one sentence Rushton read to me: it was illustrative of Best's fearlessness. He had been warned not to ride outside the city where he was staying, lest he should be captured by brigands. 'But I ride where I like', he wrote..... (Levien 1942:19)

This comment is in keeping with Best's character, and that such a danger was a reality is emphasised by Ford, who made the observation that '...it makes a single gentleman, whose life is not insured, keep his powder dry, and look every now and then if his percussion cap fits...' (Ford 1845, Ed. Robertson 1966:74&75)

It is possible that Best visited Spain for musical reasons, although Ford maintained that '...Good music, whether harmonious or scientific, vocal or instrumental, is seldom heard in Spain, notwithstanding the eternal strumming that is going on there...' (Ford 1845, Ed. Robertson 1966:284). Among the manuscript

works by Best there is an arrangement/edition of an *Offertorio* in G minor by Hilarión Eslava (1807-1878)(Liverpool City Library Dq 1282). Eslava was organist of the Royal Chapel at Madrid, and Best may have brought this music back with him from his visit. Levien (1942:20) suggests that Best went to Spain to study the organs there, and it is quite likely that he played organs during his visit, as he did on his later visit to Italy.

Perhaps it was memories of this visit which inspired the Serenade for pianoforte, *Une Nuit dans Seville*, which was published in 1859, as the first of *Three Characteristic Pieces* Op.35. The 'picturesque' title is uncharacteristic of Best, whose other piano pieces (with the exception of the March *La Garde Passe*) have titles which are descriptive of their musical form or style, such as *Valse di bravura*, *Tarantella* etc.. Ford (1845/1966:290) remarks that the '...guitar is part and parcel of the Spaniard and his ballads...', and Best's piano piece is essentially a 'song without words' with an accompaniment which imitates the sound of the guitar.

UNE NUIT DANS SEVILLE.

SERENADE.

Nº 1. Op: 35.

W. T. BEST..

una corda.

ALLEGRETTO

pp

63. The opening of W. T. Best's 'Une Nuit dans Seville'.

Hilarión Eslava.
Organist of the Royal Chapel, Madrid.

Offertorio in G minor.

Andante Maestoso.

Handwritten musical score for Organ, first system. It features two staves: the upper staff is for the right hand and the lower for the left hand. The music is in G minor and begins with a series of chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *ff* and *f*. Performance markings include *full sw.* and *rit.*. The system concludes with a *ped.* marking.

Handwritten musical score for Organ, second system. It continues the piece with similar notation and dynamics. A *mf* marking is present. The system ends with a *ped.* marking.

Handwritten musical score for Organ, third system. This system includes a section marked *Allegro moder.* with a tempo change. The notation shows more rhythmic activity. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The system concludes with a *ped.* marking.

64. W. T. Best's manuscript arrangement/edition of Hilarión Eslava's 'Offertorio'
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

Whatever the reasons for Best's visit to Spain, he was back in London by the May of 1853.

Marriage

On May 18th 1853, at Paddington Parish Church, William Thomas Best, 'bachelor and musical composer' of the Parish of St. James, Paddington, and Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria Linari, 'spinster' of the Parish of St. Paul, Covent Garden, were married by licence according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church.

Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria, the daughter of Eugenio Linari, gentleman, was born in Florence, a fact confirmed by later census returns. It is less easy to ascertain the date of her birth. The Marriage Certificate states merely that she was 'of full age'. Her gravestone, in Childwall Churchyard, gives her date of birth as January 21st 1831. The Death Certificate (27th December 1909) gives her age as 80 years, which would make her year of birth 1829. The census returns for 1861 (7th April) and 1871 (2nd April) give her age as 28 years and 38 years respectively, and thus the year of her birth as 1833. Her age on the 1881 census return (3rd April) is given as 49 years, which would mean she was born in 1832.

Levien (1942[Preface]:3) tells us that Best's wife had been an opera singer, but in some unpublished notes (Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES) he gives her name as Amalia Bellini.² This is supported by an article in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 18th February 1939:

.....Best was famous, but it is less well known that his wife was herself musically interesting. She was Amelia [an Anglicised form of Amalia (?)] Bellim [misprint of Bellini (?)], of Florence, and sang in opera with the great bass Luigi Lablache.....

Levien knew Best, and is unlikely to have made a mistake over his wife's maiden name. Best himself dedicated his *Notturmo* Op.27 '...à Melle. Amalia Bellini...' It seems reasonable to assume that as an opera singer, Amalia Linari adopted the name Bellini for professional reasons.

1851. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Paddington in the County of Middlesex

No.	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Rank or Profession of Father
12	William Thomas Best	27	Single	Medical Surgeon	of the Parish of St. James Paddington
	Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria Linari	24	Single	—	of the Parish of St. James Paddington

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by J. J. Linnis Minister of the Gospel, by me, J. J. Linnis Minister of the Gospel.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, W. T. Best and A. C. F. M. Linari in the presence of us, A. J. Linnis and J. J. Linnis.

65. Copy of the Marriage Certificate of William Thomas Best and Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria Linari.

The Best Solitaires

The Liverpool Libraries Committee received yesterday an unusual but interesting gift—the cuff-links of W. T. Best, who from 1855 was for nearly forty years organist of St. George's Hall. The solitaires are of gold, with a black inset forming the background for an inlay of coloured stones representing a cluster of flowers, and Best wore them when he was making musical history. They have been presented to the city by Mr. J. Mewburn Levien, of Hampstead, who until ten years ago was secretary of the Royal Philharmonic Society, and who is himself a former Liverpool resident and an old boy of Birkenhead School. It was to him that Liverpool owed the gift, many years ago, of its fine collection of relics and mementoes of his intimate friend, Sir Charles Santley, of Liverpool.

These solitaires were presented to Mr. Levien as a personal memento of Best on his death, by the widow, Amelia Best, who then lived at Seymour Road, Broadgreen; and Mr. Levien has handed over with them the holograph letter in which she made him the gift. Best was famous, but it is less well known that his wife was herself musically interesting. She was Amelia Bellini, of Florence, and sang in opera with the great basso Luigi Lablache.

66. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 18th February 1939.

[*Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES*]

à M^{lle} Amalia Bellini.



67. Title-page of W. T. Best's 'Notturmo' Op. 27 for pianoforte

There was a Mademoiselle Bellini who sang with the Royal Italian Opera. She sang minor rôles, such as Adalgisas in Bellini's *Norma*, and Inez in Donizetti's *La Favorita*, during the 1853 London season. Reviews in the musical press were encouraging:

.....Mdlle Bellini, with care and more experience, promises to make the best Adalgisas since Corbari. This young lady must be looked to tenderly. She has decided talent and nice feeling, but her intonation is not always true, and this fault she must endeavour to correct, if she would take a firm position in the rank of artists..... (MW Vol.xxxi, No.17, 23rd April 1853:260)

.....We must not omit to mention that the part of Inez (Leonora's confidant) was very nicely played by Mademoiselle Bellini..... (MW Vol.xxxi, No.30, 23rd July 1853:260)

She sang at a concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society on the 29th August 1853, but suffered from '...extreme nervousness...' (MW Vol.xxxi, No.37, 10th Sept.1853:583). She also sang with 'Mr. Beale's Italian Concert Party' at concerts in Leamington, Shrewsbury, Leeds, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. The reviews and advertisements never give a first name, so it is impossible to be certain whether this is Amalia Bellini or Luigina Bellini (who also sang at Covent Garden between 1847 and 1855 (archives of Covent Garden Opera House)), or even someone completely different. Although it is perfectly reasonable to assume that Amalia Bellini and Amalia Linari are the same person, we should not necessarily assume that this is the person referred to in the reviews. Nevertheless, the review of 23rd April 1853 reads like that for a newcomer, rather than a veteran of several London seasons. That she did not appear in the 1854 season (MW Vol.xxxii, No.14, 8th April 1854:234) would fit with the birth of her first child (14th March), although she did perform in the April, May and June of 1855, which would have been after the birth of her second child (7th March). That Best's wife was an opera singer seems to be certain:

.....Mrs. Best told me that when she sang one of the wicked sisters in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* with the great Lablache he used to make them take his arms and would press theirs to his chest: the vibrations of it when he sang were so strong they were glad to let them go..... (Levien, postscript to an unpublished manuscript, dated 20th September 1939, Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES)

On Thursday night Grisi made her *rentrée* in *Norma*. The house was crowded in every part, all the *habitués* of the opera, all the *connoisseurs*, and all the subscribers being present to do homage to the queen *prima-donna*. The reception was of course enthusiastic and prolonged. Grisi is certainly thinner than she was last season, but she is still as handsome as ever. She was completely overpowered by the applause, and did not recover herself until the end of the "Casta Diva." To say that Grisi's voice is as fresh and luscious and limpid as in days gone by would be perhaps exhibiting a tendency to hyperbole; but to say that Grisi's voice is as grand, as large, and as powerful as ever, would not be to state a whit more than the truth. Grisi's *Norma* has been so often eulogised, and is so familiar to the opera-going public, that it would be almost a truism to praise and particularise it. Enough to say, the performance of Thursday night was instinct with reality and beauty, and that the great points were seized upon with avidity, and given with all the power and effect of past seasons. The tremendous energy and force always exemplified in the trio in the first act was never made more manifest; while the quieter and profounder beauties of the last scene stirred up the hearts and filled the eyes as of yore. That Grisi was called twice after the first act, and twice more after the second, was the inevitable consequence of Grisi appearing in the two acts of *Norma*. Thursday night may be called the second grand epoch of the season.

Tamberlik—the best of Pollios since Donzelli, if not before—was in fine voice, and sang admirably. His pathetic singing in the final scene was unutterably fine. Nevertheless, what a falling away from Arnaldo to Pollio! Formes is the best of the Grovesos after Lablache; and Mdlle. Bellini, with great care and more experience, promises to make the best of Adalgisas since Corbari. This young lady must be looked to tenderly. She has decided talent and nice feeling, but her intonation is not always true, and this fault she must endeavour to correct, if she would take a firm position in the rank of artists.

68. *The Musical World*, Vol. xxxi, No. 17, 23rd April 1853, page 260.

Review of Mademoiselle Bellini as Adalgisas in Bellini's 'Norma'

Whether Amalia Linari sang under the name of Bellini, and whether or not she sang with the Royal Italian Opera in the early years of the decade, she seems to have given up her singing career when the Best family moved from London to Liverpool in 1855.

The eldest child, Amalia Catarina Fortunata Maria, named after her mother, was born at their home (7, York Street, St. Paul, Covent Garden) on the 14th March 1854.³ By the time of the birth of their second daughter, Clara Eliza, on the 7th March 1855, the Bests had moved to 98, Regent Street.⁴

In October 1853, the following announcement appeared in the musical press:

.....Mr. W. T. Best has been appointed organist and professor of organ at the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester Square..... (MT. Vol.v, 1st November 1853:284)

The Royal Panopticon of Science and Art

.....whilst the eye is gratified with an Exhibition of every startling novelty which science and the fine arts can produce, and the ear enchanted with delectable and soul-stirring music, the mind shall have food of the most invigorating character.....

(*The Illustrated Hand Book of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art* 1854:8)

(a) The Spirit of 1851

The same spirit of delight in discoveries in the sciences and the arts, and the desire to promote education, which were the driving forces of the Great Exhibition of 1851, found another outlet in the founding of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, '...An Institution for Scientific Exhibitions, and for promoting Discoveries in Arts and Manufacture...' (*Illustrated Hand Book* 1854:title-page). The Royal Panopticon was situated in Leicester Square, and its aims were similar to those of the Polytechnic Institution at the upper end of Regent Street, and of the Adelaide Gallery, off the Strand, behind the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

On 21st February 1850, a Royal Charter was granted to Edward Marmaduke Clarke and all who were, or might become, shareholders in the company, whose capital was to be £80,000. The terms of the Charter were:

To exhibit and illustrate, in a popular form, discoveries in science and art, to extend the knowledge of useful and ingenious inventions, to promote and illustrate the application of science to the useful arts; to instruct, by courses of lectures, to be demonstrated and illustrated by instruments, apparatus and other appliances, all branches of science, literature, and the fine and useful arts; to exhibit various branches of the fine and mechanical arts, manufactures and handicrafts, by showing the progress to completion in the hands of the artisan and mechanic; to exhibit the production of nature and art, both British and Foreign; to illustrate history, science, literature, and the fine and useful arts, by pictorial views and representations; to illustrate the science of acoustics, by lectures, music and otherwise; to give instruction in the various branches of science and the mechanical arts; to afford inventors and others facilities to test the value of their ideas by means of the machinery, instruments, and other appurtenances of the Institution; and generally to extend and facilitate a greater knowledge and love of the arts and sciences on the part of the public. And that the establishment and maintenance of such Institution would greatly tend to the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the improvement of the arts, and more especially would, by combining instruction with amusement, supply a source of recreation to all classes of the community, calculated to elevate their social, moral and intellectual condition. (*Illustrated Hand Book* 1854:8&9)

The management of the Royal Panopticon was regulated by a deed of settlement dated 18th December 1850. The Council was under the presidency of Gerard Noel Hoare, who was a member of the banking family, and had fought at the Battle of Navarino in 1827. He was soon succeeded by Samuel Gurney (Junior), a member of the wealthy Quaker family, founder of the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association, and later Member of Parliament for Falmouth (*Survey of London* Vol.xxxiv 1966:492).

The lofty aims of the establishment were set out at great length in the Introduction of the *Illustrated Hand Book*.

.....the promoters of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art felt persuaded that the time had arrived for the establishment of some additional, but more energetic source of diffusion of knowledge, - some other culminating point from whence the discoveries of an age prolific in inventions, might secure a ready outlet. These were not the only incentives. Experience has shown, that with a rapidly increasing population, there had sprung up a growing taste for intellectual pursuits, and especially those which afford the means of experimental illustration.

For the gratification of this taste the metropolis has, unquestionably, been, hitherto, insufficiently supplied. Existing means, admirable and praise-worthy in their way, had suffered themselves to be overtaken in the march of knowledge; they were incapable of appealing with an energy and persuasiveness commensurate with the importance of their self-imposed privileges; they had become rather the reminiscences of the past, than the representations of the present or the precursors of the future. How far the Royal Panopticon will better perform its destiny remains to be seen..... (*Illustrated Hand Book* 1854:5&6)

The Council was determined that the Royal Panopticon should not be a '...place for mere lounging and sight-seeing...', and regarded as most important, '...profitable activity...', so that '...whilst the eye is gratified with an exhibition of every startling novelty which science and the fine arts can produce, and the ear enchanted with delectable and soul-stirring music, the mind shall have food of the most invigorating character...' (*Illustrated Hand Book* 1854:9).

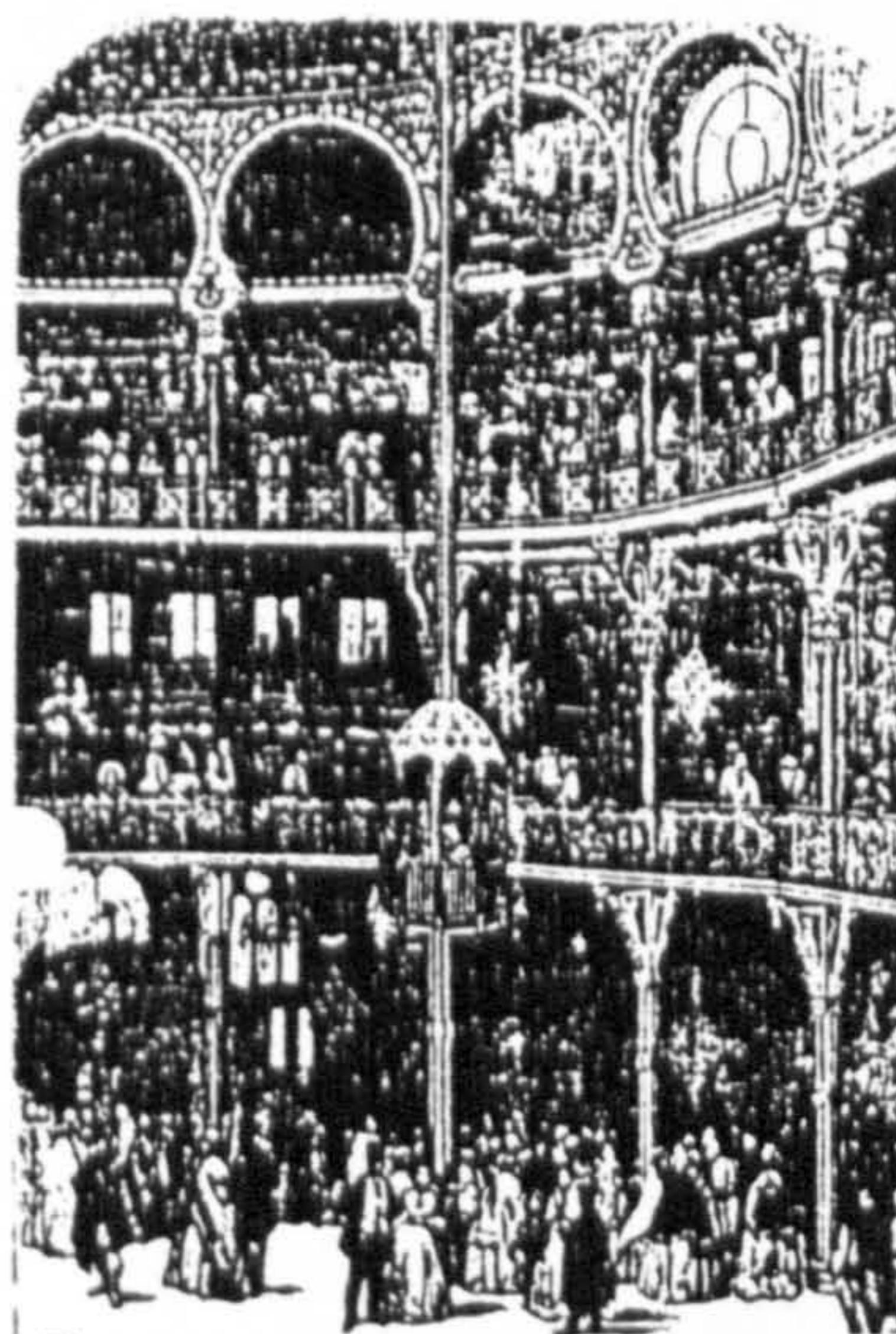
(b) The Building

By the time of the first public meeting of the Institution, in October 1851, a sixty-year lease of a site on the east side of Leicester Square had been obtained. A building in Saracenic, or Moorish style was designed by the institution's architect, T. Hayter Lewis. The Royal Panopticon of Science and Art was opened to the public on the 16th March 1854, and with the first month there was a total of 1,000 visitors a day.

(c) The Exhibits

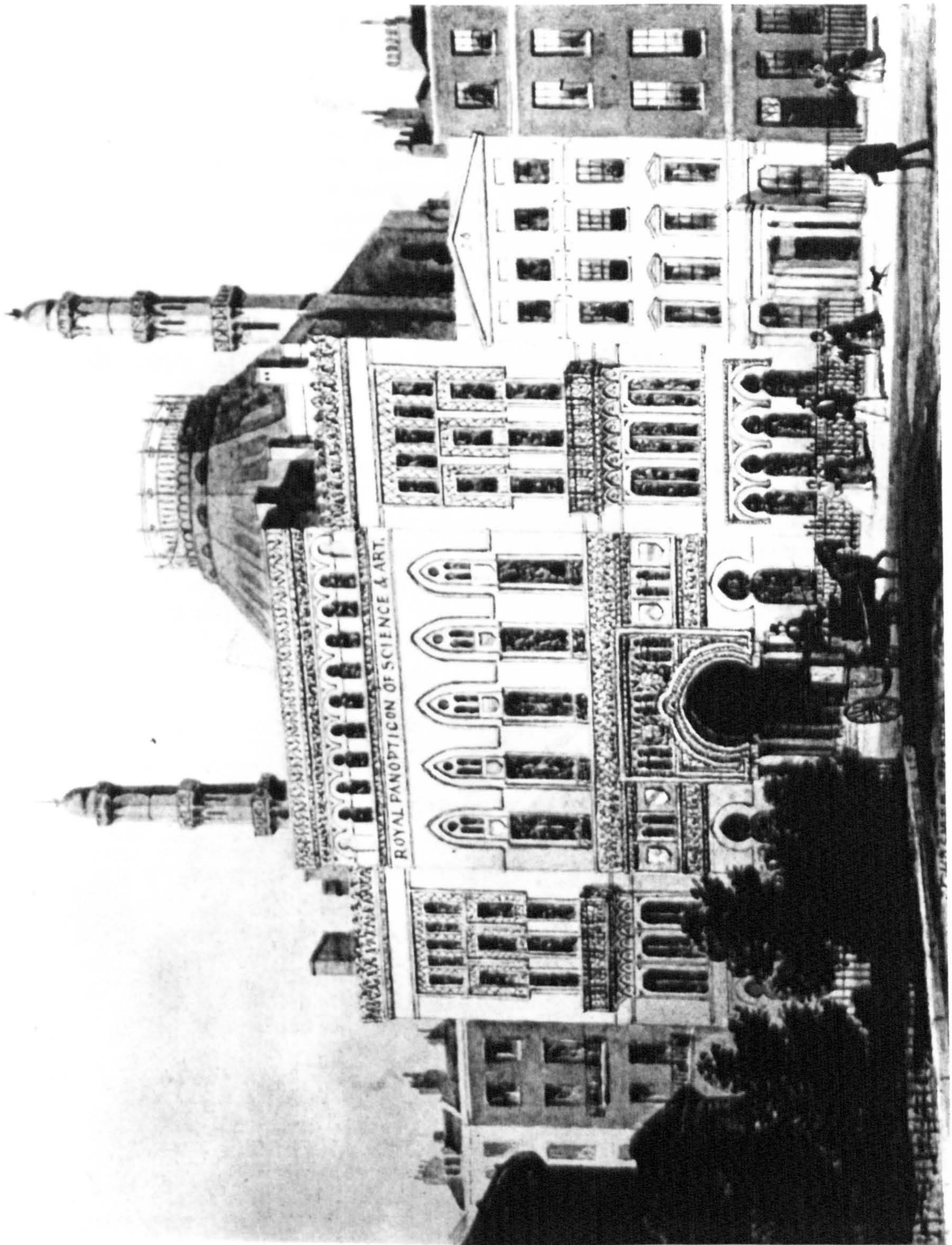
These were described in the *Musical World* of 11th November 1854. After drawing attention to the low cost of admission, the magazine went on to describe some of the principal features;

.....the wonderful and gigantic electric machine, without equal in the world; the large Leyden battery; the Magneto-Electric Machine; the diving apparatus, by means of which a muscular gentleman descends into the water, and walks about in that element with a degree of ease and unconcern that must put the fishes to shame; the Chrysalis Life Preserver; and the various fairylike models, not to mention other subjects of startling effect, on a smaller scale, such as the ascending and descending carriages, by which the adventurous visitor is conveyed to and from the lower and upper parts of the building, seated (generally) in solitary glory, and looking, in spite of his efforts to appear unconcerned, singularly ill at ease, under the gaze of the many faces directed in silent astonishment towards him..... (MW Vol.xxxii, No.45, 11th November 1854:742)



Photographic Ascending Carriage.

69. *The Ascending Carriage.*
[*The Illustrated Hand Book*]



70. The façade of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art.

This article continues by describing the other exhibits: sculptures, paintings, the photographic department, and examples of industrial art and manufacture – pointing out that the machinery could be seen in use:

.....the entire process of several branches of manufacture may here be gathered from practical illustrations. Amongst the productive machinery in operation, may be noticed Morgan's Jacquard-loom, for figured silks; Dart and Son's printing-loom; the glass-blowing apparatus; and the vertical machinery for cutting out patterns, in wood or metal, for inlaid or carved wood, such as parquetry floors, mosaic boxes, desks, bookshelves, brackets and ladies' work-tables..... (MW Vol.xxxii, No.45, 11th November 1854:783)

A great attraction proved to be the showing of panoramic and dioramic views:

.....the moving panorama of Verona, which with the dioramic views accompanying it, is one of the leading attractions.....The dioramic views.....follow the exhibition of the panorama; and these in turn are succeeded by a dioramic miscellany, consisting of the prismatic disc, which is designed to illustrate certain optical phenomena; a succession of chromatropic effects; and an allegory in which the Queen appears enthroned as the patroness of the arts and sciences..... (MW Vol.xxxii, No.45, 11th November 1854:742&743)

The Royal Panopticon offered a wide scope of activity, which, as can be seen from the advertisement reproduced below, included music.

ROYAL PANOPTICON OF SCIENCE AND ART,
LEICESTER-SQUARE.—Programme for the week:—The Luminous Fountain, daily, at the close of the Dioramic Exhibition; Lectures on Electricity, by Dr. H. M. Noad; on the application of Metals to the Useful Arts, by Mr. G. F. Ansell, on Wednesday evening, at 8.15. Scientific demonstrations during the week, on Chemistry, by Mr. G. F. Ansell; Meteors, by Mr. W. R. Birt; Mechanics, by Mr. Partington; Natural Magic, by Mr. J. D. Malcolm; Marine Architecture and Navigation, by Mr. G. F. Warr; Scientific Biography, by Mr. Hugo Reid; Machinery and Manufactures, by Mr. C. Rickman. Moving Panoramic and Dioramic Views of Verona, and Chromatropes, with Heikes's Diving Apparatus, twice daily—the Grand Organ, by Mr. T. W. Best, at intervals. Principal performance, daily, at 2.15. Distin's Flügel Horn Union every evening (except Saturday) at 9.15. Songs, Glee, and Madrigals, by Mr. J. Howe, assisted by other vocalists, on Tuesday and Friday, at 3.15. For further particulars, see the programme appended to the catalogue. Hours of Exhibition—Morning, Twelve to Five; Evening, Seven to Ten (Saturday evening excepted). Admission, 1s.; Schools, and Children under Ten, Half-price; Life Admission, Ten Guineas; Annual Admission, Gentlemen, Two Guineas; Ladies, One Guinea and a Half.

71. *The Musical World* [Vol.xxxii, No.45, 11th November 1854:750]

(d) Music at the Royal Panopticon

*"Music, sphere-descending maid,
Friend of pleasure, wisdom's aid"
(The Illustrated Hand Book 1854:30)*

The Council intended the Royal Panopticon to be used for the performance of Music.

.....Music, in its loftiest form, will constitute one of the main attractions of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art. The rotunda is eminently adapted for the '*discourse of sweet sounds*', great care having been exercised to profit by the experience of others, in avoiding the errors too often apparent in rooms built even expressly for musical entertainment..... (*Illustrated Hand Book 1854:31*)

The institution lived up to its name insofar as interest was shown in the application of scientific inventions to musical purposes. The *Hand Book* described a novel invention, which it named 'The Musical Narrator'.

.....The scientific portion of the musical public will be gratified to find an adaption of this universal and wondrous agent [electricity] to their wants and wishes.

The recording of improvised compositions, the result of inspired moments of some of our highest composers, has long been a desideratum. The electric current is made to jot down every note of the most rapid passage, while at the same instant, it divides the surface of the prepared paper or other fabric, into the usual lines and spaces, ruling also faint lines for the higher and lower notes. The most rapid change of time or key is recorded together with the flats, sharps and accidentals, and the relative value of every note. Nothing is lost. This interesting instrument is the invention of Wildman Whitehouse, Esq. of Brighton..... (*Illustrated Hand Book 1854:97&98*)

There was also the 'Euphotine', invented by James Petit, Esq. F.R.A.S., which consisted of coated tuning-forks, in which the sound was produced by a damp finger being '*...passed over the vitreous surface of the tines...*'. The resulting tone bore '*...a strong analogy to Dr. [Benjamin] Franklin's [glass] harmonica...*' (*Illustrated Hand Book 1854:105*). In July 1853, prior to the Panopticon being fully open to the public, a concert was given '*...with the purposes of testing the musical capabilities of this truly magnificent edifice...*' (MW Vol.xxxi, No.29, 16th July 1853:453&454).⁵ The writer of this account of the concert mentions the organ, which was erected in the rotunda, and which was described as '*...the best, the most perfect thing of the kind in England...*' (MW Vol.xxxii, No.28, 15th July 1854:476).

(e) The Organ of the Royal Panopticon

Early in 1853, the following announcement appeared in the *Musical Times*:

NEW ORGAN - Messrs. Hill and Co. are building an organ for the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester Square which will be by far the largest instrument of the kind in the metropolis - it consists of four manuals from CC to A in alt., and a pedal organ from CCC to F a range of 30 notes; it will contain all modern improvements of the science of organbuilding. (MT Vol.v, 1st April 1853:52)

The organ was large, having sixty-one speaking stops (Hopkins & Rimbault, 1st edition, 1855:443&444),⁶ and incorporated the latest technological developments applied to organ building.

.....It comprises not only all the usual modern improvements, but several new inventions in mechanism; among which are an entirely new method of drawing the Stops, by Pneumatic agency; an improved system of Composition Pedals; and a Pedal for first drawing out the Stops one by one, in gradual succession, and afterwards of reducing them in a similar manner, so as to produce a perfect Crescendo and Diminuendo, desiderata which have hitherto been considered unattainable by mechanical means, except by the aid of a Swell Pedal..... (Hopkins & Rimbault, 1st edition, 1855:443)

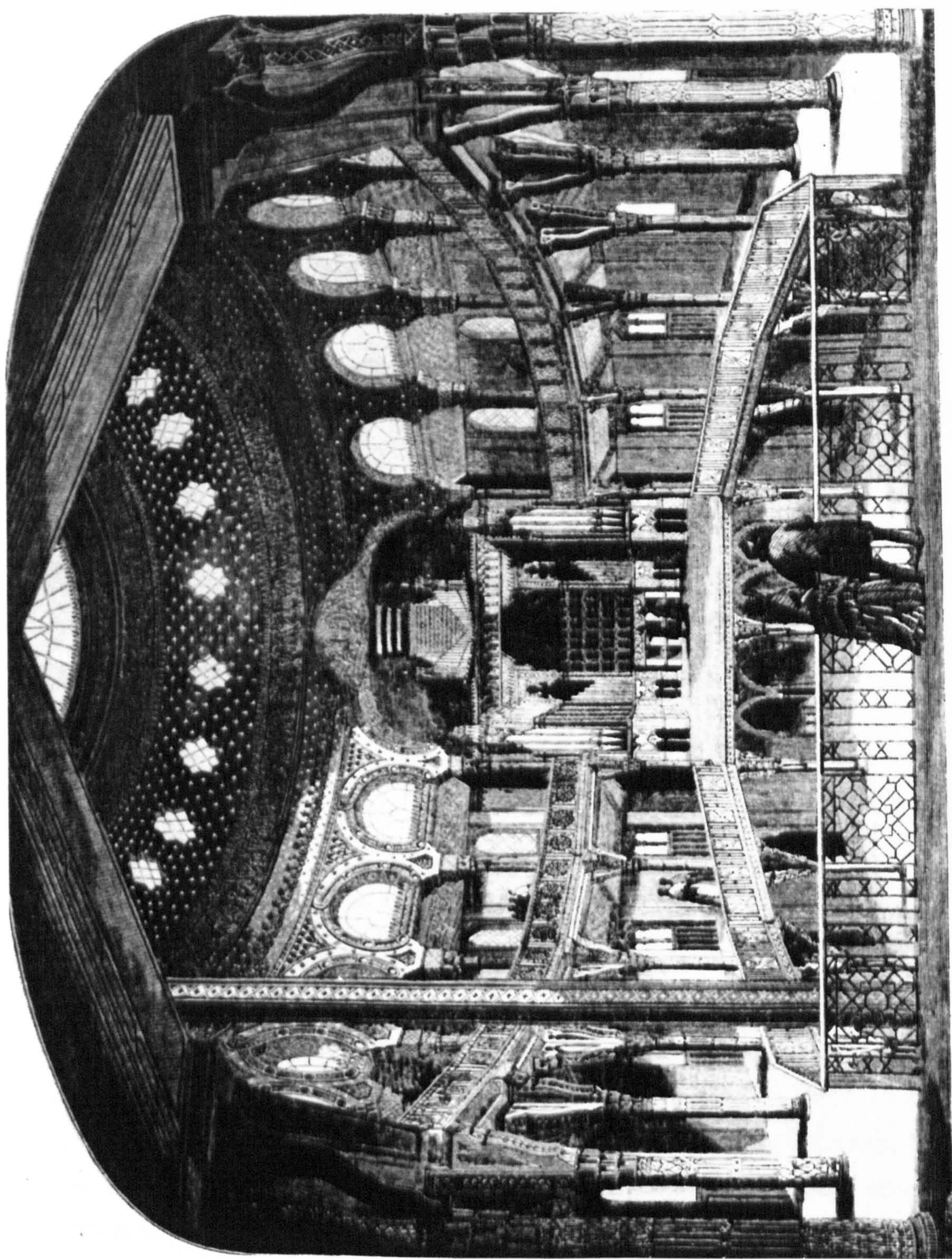
These aids to registration were perfectly suited to the new style of organ playing developed by W. T. Best. That the instrument was intended for secular use was emphasised by Hill in a letter to the Council:

Gentlemen

Having attentively considered the place for the proposed organ to be erected in your institution, we beg to recommend an instrument of the annexed description as we consider most suitable to the building and the purpose for which it is required.

1. The objects which we presume you have in view are to provide an ins[trument] of sufficient variety of tone to produce orchestral effects, and adapted to the performance of that lighter class of music required to illustrate the dissolving views.
2. To possess an Grand Organ of extensive compass and power containing a full complement of stops and breadth of tone, so as to be available for the performance of the higher class of music, and the accompaniment of singing.

..... (William Hill, Letter Book 1838-1861, Vol.i:282, English Organ Archive)



72. *The Rotunda of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, showing the position of the organ by William Hill.*

Another novel feature was the provision of duplicate keyboards to the right and left of the main keyboards, acting on separate pallets in the corresponding soundboards, allowing the instrument to be played by three organists at the same time.

One of the reed stops was placed 'en chamade':

.....The powerful reed stops (Tuba) are placed in a horizontal position, to the great advantage of their tone and appearance. This modification, a peculiar feature in the Spanish organs, is now, for the first time introduced into this country..... (*Illustrated Hand Book* 1854:32)

It would be interesting to know whether this 'modification' came about as a result of W. T. Best's visit to Spain.

The organ was tuned to equal temperament. Dr. S. S. Wesley, an ardent advocate of the older system of tuning, described his reaction to the equally tempered tuning of this instrument:

.....On first hearing the large instrument, by Messrs. Hill, in the Panopticon, I could not account for the quality of the diapasons, on which Mr. Best, the organist of the place, was at that moment playing, and remarked to my companion, a very eminent organ-builder, that the voicing, I thought, could not be finished, it seeming impossible that Messrs. Hill could have left an instrument possessed of such a disagreeable quality. 'oh', said my friend, after some reflection, 'it's the *equal temperament* you don't like'. 'So', I rejoined, 'so *this* is equal temperament! I am astonished that any respectable organ-builder will yield to such an objectionable fashion'..... (MS Vol.i, No.23, 1st July 1863:337)

The instrument was described in the *Illustrated Hand Book* (1854:32) as surpassing '...in size, tone and comprehensiveness, every organ in the metropolis...'. The *Musical World* devoted two articles to a detailed description of it (Vol.xxxii, No.28, 15th July 1854:475-477 and No.32, 12th August 1854:533-535). These articles were written by Henry Smart (Thistlethwaite 1990:207). After describing the instrument as '...if not perfect, it is without equal in this country...', he continues by describing the outward appearance of the organ. An unusual feature was that the apparatus for projecting the 'dissolving views' was placed behind the instrument, and projection was through the centre of the organ onto a screen, which could be

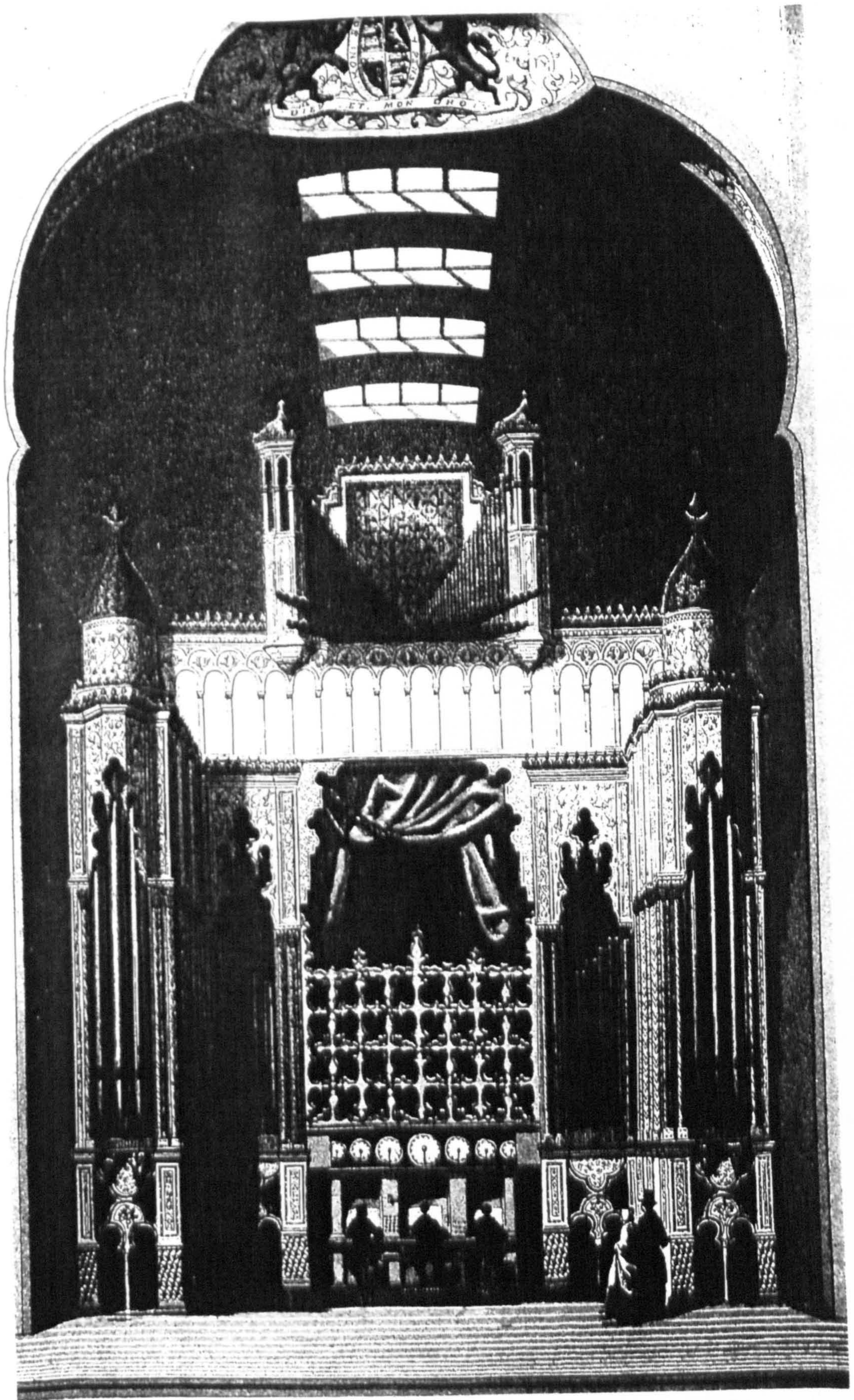
suspended twenty feet in front of the case.

.....So well, however, has the architect managed his share of the matter, that this "hole" scarcely at all deteriorates from the very elegant and effective appearance of the exterior. Nothing of the kind, can be more novel and striking than the general arrangement of the front. Two large "wings" or "towers" at the sides, containing a portion of the pedal-organ, and displaying some of the sixteen-feet work gilt, project several feet beyond the general line of the front; along the centre, and immediately above the usual impost, rises a very elegant piece of screen-work decorated with gilding and polychrome; next comes the "hole" before mentioned, and above that a species of upper cornice, skilfully connected at the sides with the screen-work below. From this cornice project horizontally the two ranks of the "Tuba mirabilis"; immediately above them stands the soundboard of the solo organ - its pipes gilt and in full view; and lastly towers up to the ceiling the swell-box, its Venetian front being richly and tastefully ornamented with gilding and colour. It is impossible not to admire the skill with which the architect has wrought up some matters of very ugly necessity into an harmonious and beautiful ensemble. The continuous up-rising lines of carved work and gilded pipes with which the unusual organ-case conceals its interior mechanism, were clearly out of the question. The optician was to be considered, and a "hole" left for the display of his devices. But so well has the thing been managed that, notwithstanding the materials of the solo and swell organs are displayed in all their Matter-of-fact and naked integrity, their position, the tasteful style of their decoration, and the pyramidal form they assume, contribute, rather than otherwise, to the striking and elegant effect of the whole..... (MW, Vol.xxxii, No.28, 15th July 1854:475)

The mechanism was compared unfavourably with the work of Cavallé-Coll:

.....Neither in plan nor execution is the mechanism of the Panopticon organ *perfect*. We could not, for instance, compare it - neither, we are sure, would Mr. Hill himself do so - with that of the Paris *Madeleine*. The English public and their guides, the professors, have not yet the taste to exact, nor have our workmen the skill to achieve, the thoughtful and exquisite finish of Cavallé's performance. Yet Mr. Hill's grand organ, if it will not bear these extreme tests of comparison, is by much in advance of everything that he or any of his countrymen had previously completed..... (MW, Vol.xxxii, No.28, 15th July 1854:476)

Comments on the tonal side of the organ are generally complimentary. The reed stops on the Great Organ had a separate soundboard, with the upper 2½ octaves having a higher pressure of wind - an idea developed from Cavallé-Coll's 'increasing-pressure' system. This was the second instance of this system being used in Great Britain, the first being in the organ that Gray & Davison built for the Glasgow City Hall in 1853, but Smart regretted, however, that it had only been applied to the reeds of the Great Organ. The solo division receives some criticism, because, in the writer's estimation, it should contain '...qualities of tone not to be produced by any combination of the other manuals; and solo-stops, flutes, and



73. *The Organ in the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art.*

reeds of various kinds, on such an amount of air-pressure that their force should penetrate when required through anything short of the *fortissimo* of the rest of the rest of this instrument...' – the only stop to achieve this being the 'Grand Tuba Mirabilis', which Smart describes as '...magnificent...' (MW Vol.xxxii, No.32, 12th August 1854:534).

The pneumatic-lever was applied to the organ, but not to the mechanism of the Swell and Solo organs. True to the spirit of the age, the organ was the first to be blown by steam-power (MW, Vol.xxxii, No.28, 15th July 1854:477). This instrument was '...a magisterial summing up of the previous decade in which all the principal features of [Hill's]...established practice could be found...' (Thistlethwaite 1990:207). Once again, W. T. Best was to have at his disposal an instrument which incorporated the latest developments in technology, and, with its stop-controls and 'crescendo' and 'decrescendo' pedals, was perfectly suited to his style of organ playing; and for a second time, he was at the centre of an enterprise which in its ideals and aims contained the very essence of Victorian philosophy.

(f) Organist and Professor of Music

Best's duties as 'Professor of the Organ' were outlined in the *Illustrated Hand Book* (1854:34&35):

.....The want of a suitable organ to which easy access may, at all times, be had, has limited the knowledge of the instrument to comparatively few individuals in the kingdom. Other circumstances have also conspired to prevent the full appreciation of this most perfect and majestic of all musical instruments.

To obviate these difficulties, the magnificent organ of the Royal Panopticon will be afforded as a medium of instruction, with the professional assistance of Mr. W. T. Best, the Organist and Professor of Music. Besides the allotted periods for lessons, the organ at stated hours of the week, will be at the disposal of students for practice. It is unnecessary to point out the paramount advantages which are afforded by an instrument of such power, compass and perfection, and that too, in a room admirably adapted for music, without which it would be impossible to acquire one of the most important attributes of proficiency – a correct ear.

The fee for instruction is fixed at Twelve guineas for a course of Twenty lessons, each of forty minutes duration. In this, as in every other department, the educational economy of the Royal Panopticon, proficiency will be attested under the seal of the Corporation, and the signature of the professor.....

Every day the organ was used for performances of organ music. As an advertisement in the *Musical World* of 11th November 1854 (Vol.xxxii, No.45:750) announced: '...Sacred and Operatic music is performed daily at intervals, by Mr. W. T. Best...'. For the week beginning on Monday the 5th June 1854, the following programme was played:

12.30	Aria: <i>O had I Jubal's lyre</i> March (posthumous work)	HANDEL MOZART
1.45	Andante, Op.65 Overture: <i>Olimpia</i>	HUMMEL SPONTINI
3.00	Prelude and Fugue	MENDELSSOHN
4.30	Pastorale for organ Double Chorus: <i>From the censer</i>	GORDIGIANI HANDEL
7.15	Preghiera: <i>Dal tuo stellato</i>	ROSSINI
8.15	Overture: <i>Euryanthe</i>	WEBER

(MW, Vol.xxxii, No.22, 3rd June 1854)

ROYAL PANOPTICON OF SCIENCE AND ART,
LEICESTER SQUARE.—Mr. W. T. Best will play the following compositions upon the Grand Organ, on Monday, June 5th, and during the week. For convenience of visitors, the hours of performance are added to the programme. 12-30.—Aria, "O had I Jubal's Lyre," Handel; March (posthumous work), Mozart. 1-45.—Andante, Op. 65, Hummel; Overture, "Olimpia." Spontini. 3.—Prelude and Fugue, Mendelssohn. 4-30.—Pastorale, for the Organ, Gordigiani—Double Chorus from the "Censer," Handel. Also in the Evening at 7-15.—Preghiera, "Dal tuo stellato," Rossini. 8-15.—Overture, "Euryanthe," Weber.

74. *The Musical World*, 3rd June 1854.

Best's playing of the organ in the Panopticon firmly established his reputation as a performer in London. The organ was also used to accompany the great choral works:

.....I remember it [the organ at the Panopticon] being used....in performances of *Acis and Galatea*, and part of *The Creation*. Mr. Best (then in the springtime of his reputation) being the organist..... (MO, No.211, 1st April 1895:445)

Although the *Illustrated Hand Book* (1854:31) had declared that '...Music, in its loftiest form, will constitute one of the main attractions of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art...', an article, published in the *Musical World* of the 6th January 1855, suggests that the institution was failing to achieve this aim. After pointing out that, at the Panopticon, there was a combination of '...a great instrument and a great performer...', the writer continues:

.....If even Mr. Best were enjoined to perform the real organ-music of Händel, Bach, and Mendelssohn from time to time (once in the morning and once in the evening, at least), which would interest, and draw to the Panopticon a large number of amateurs, there would be something to show for the cost of the player and the instrument. But nothing of the sort. Mr. Best is set down to "illustrate" the *Battle of Alma*, and the six-and-twenty "dissolving views" of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp!* Fancy such things, accompanied by music on the organ, solus - and such an organ, too, as that of Mr. Hill!

On the several occasions we have attended at the Panopticon (for the solitary purpose of listening to the organ and its talented exponent). We have heard nothing but "arrangements", and bagatelles that should never be played on the "King of Instruments" at all...This is utterly disgraceful. It is unjust to Mr. Hill, the builder; it is unjust to Mr. Best, the professor; it is unjust to the organ, as a noble piece of workmanship; and unjust to the Panopticon, as a *dépôt* for the exhibition of science and art, which ought to have nothing in common with the conventional clap-trap, "condescensions", vulgarities, and puerilities of casinos and raree-shows..... (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.1, 6th January 1855:9)

This onslaught was answered in the following issue, by T. L. Brown, the Secretary of the Panopticon, who, after describing the above statement as 'utterly disgraceful', went on to write:

.....No day has elapsed since the opening of the institution on which organ music, including Händel, J. S. Bach, Mendelssohn Bröck, Schneider, Hesse, Krebs, and other composers of the same stamp, has not formed an item on the programme. As regards the incidental use of the organ at other periods, it is palpably absurd to object to it, so long as the legitimate use of the instrument for the highest purpose is not lost sight of..... (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.2, 13th January 1855:25)

The *Musical World* accepted this point, but continued '...when Mr. Best is not firing off canon at the *Battle of Alma*, or enlivening *Aladdin's Lamp*...he may solace himself and his more initiated hearers with something more worthy of his own talent and their appreciation...' The magazine maintained that Best should be treated with greater consideration, and not '...at one moment...set down to [play] Bach's pedal fugues or Mendelssohn's sonatas, and at another to do the work of first fiddle at the pantomime...' (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.2, 13th January 1855:25).

That the organ was intended for uses other than the playing of the legitimate organ repertoire was explicit from the outset, and was mentioned in William Hill's *Report to the Council*. In the 1850's there were many panoramic and optical displays in London (de Maré 1972 lists at least a dozen in 1851), and these were often accompanied by organ music. The rotunda of the Royal Panopticon had been specially designed for the projection of such optical displays, the organ itself being built around the projector, and it must have come as no surprise to W. T. Best that he was expected to provide suitable music for such displays.

Some of the music used by Best for these displays has survived in manuscript form, under the title of *Thematic Index of Music for the Dioramas* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1649). Included are *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp* and *Scenes in the Crimea* (which includes the *Battle of Alma*). It is also possible that the manuscript sketch of a *Military Fantasia (to commemorate the Battle of Inkermann, fought November 5th 1854)* was also used for the same purpose.

The *Musical World* (Vol.xxxiii, No.1, 6th Jan. 1855:90) asked '...why ...does not Mr. Best himself remonstrate?...', and later in that year there was a serious disagreement between Best and the management of the Royal Panopticon over different musical matter.

[originals in colour]



75. "Aladdin"



76. "Russian Officers at the Crimea"

Slides used at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, and probably similar to those used at the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art.

Thematic Index

of Music

for the

Dioramas

77. The title-page of W. T. Best's 'Thematic Index of Music for the Dioramas'.

[Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

"Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp"

Overture



1. The Magician in his Study - 2. Aladdin with his Companions

3. Meets the Magician. *Facet* 4. Presents him to his mother - 5. Aladdin & the Magician

at the mouth of the Cave. 6. Aladdin takes the Lamp. 7. Aladdin tries to

leave the cave with the Lamp 8. He is in despair. 9. The Genies appear. *Facet*

10. Panorama - Flight through the air. 11. Aladdin at home. *Facet*

12. The Genies appear 13. The Princess goes to the Bath. *Facet*

14. The hand of the Princess demanded. 15. Aladdin returns with his Bride *Facet*

16. The Palace flies away. - 17. The King demands his daughter *Facet*

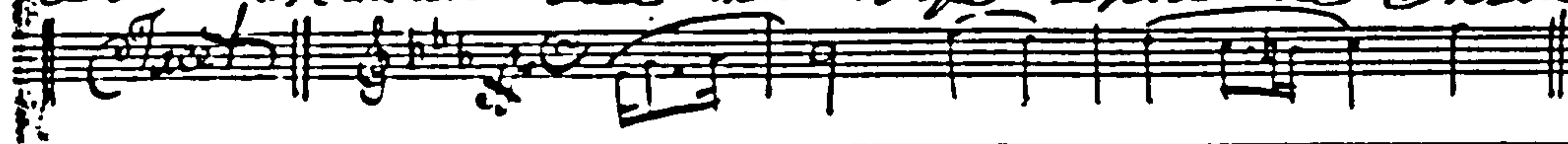
18. The Magician obsessed by Aladdin with his Wife. —

Effect

19. The Magician is killed by Aladdin. —

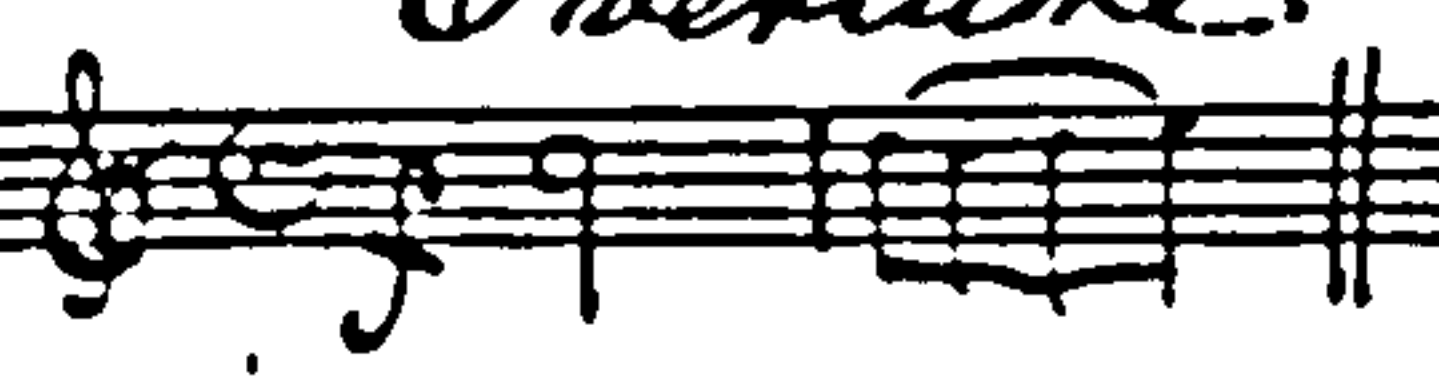
Effect

20. Aladdin and his Wife upon the Throne



Scenes in the Crimea.

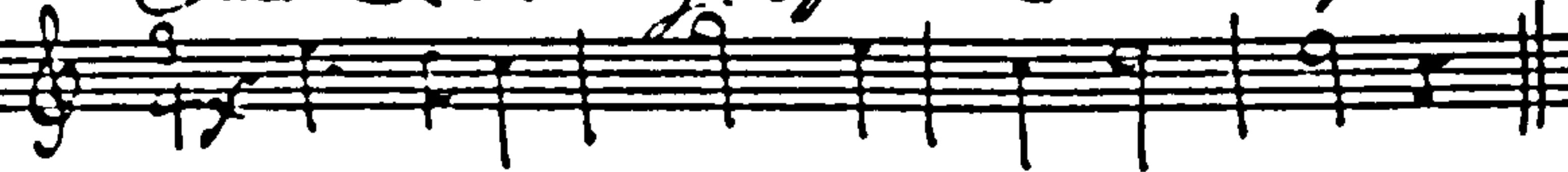
Overture.



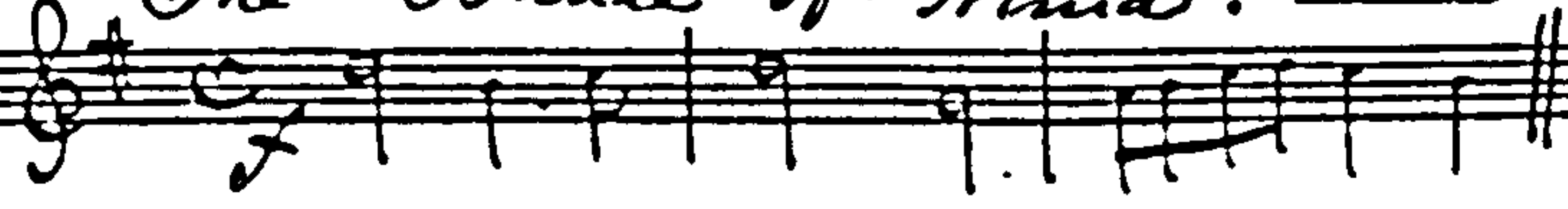
1. Sevastopol before the Declaration of War. —



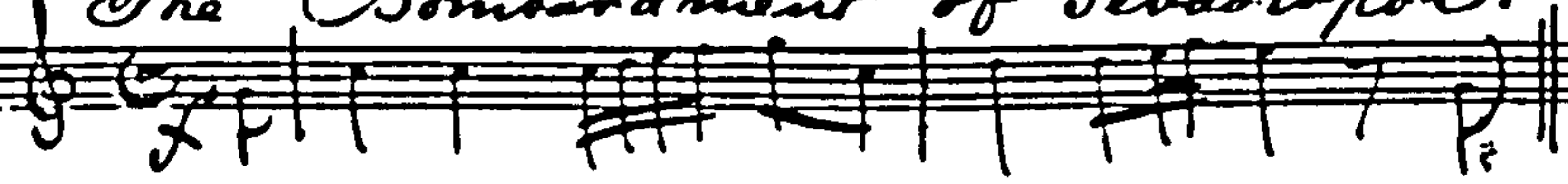
2. The Landing of the Troops. —



3. The Battle of Alvia. —



4. The Bombardment of Sevastopol. —



Sketch in ink on paper

Commemorate the Battle of
Inkermann - 1854
No. 54. 1854.

Military Fantasia

W. B. Gilbey

Ed. Cap. Sr. - (64)

Adagio e pianissimo *pp*

Oboe Sr.
(Tran.)

Dul. Sr.

Oboe Sr. (Tran.)

Fl.

Oboe Sr.
(Tran.)

Dul.

Oboe

Fl.

Ed. Cap. Sr. - (64)

Fl. (Tran.)

Dul.

32

Allegretto

Sr. Double Basses Open - *pp* *allegro*
(Tran.)

Ch. Trumpet.

here

mp

Full Sr.
rit. molto

Dul. Sr.

Allegro

80. 'Military Fantasia - To Commemorate the Battle of Inkermann, 1854'

[Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

(g) W. T. Best's Departure from the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art

The *Musical World* of 2nd June 1855 (Vol.xxxiii, No.22:345) announced that Edmund Thomas Chipp (1823-1886) had been appointed organist to the Royal Panopticon. This was followed by an advertisement from Best in the following issue:

ROYAL PANOPTICON, Leicester Square. - THE ORGAN.

Mr. W. T. BEST begs to inform his Friends and the Public, that, he is NO LONGER CONNECTED with this Institution as Organist.

(MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.23, 9th June 1855:366)

All the details surrounding Best's departure from the Royal Panopticon were outlined in the *Musical World* of 23rd June 1855 (Vol.xxxiii, No.25:396&397).

The case of Mr. W. T. Best *versus* the Manager and Council of the Panopticon, does not seem to be fairly before the public. Mr. Best, having seceded from the post of organist (how and wherefore matters little), was perfectly entitled to advertise in the newspapers that he had no further connection with the institution. He availed himself of his right, as any other professional man would have done in a similar predicament. Because Mr. Best, who lives by the exercise of his talents, is no longer organist at the Panopticon, is that any reason why he should starve? The Manager and Council would seem to think so, if we may draw conclusions from a circular forwarded to the office of the *Musical World*, and which we subjoin:-

Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester-Square,
15th June, 1855.

The Secretary presents his compliments to the Editor of the *Musical World*, and is directed to request the favour of the insertion of the enclosed paragraph in an early number of that journal:-

[PARAGRAPH]

"THE ORGANIST AT THE ROYAL PANOPTICON. - An advertisement, headed 'Royal Panopticon', having appeared in several journals, in which Mr. W. T. Best 'begs to inform his friends and the public that he is no longer connected with this institution as organist', we are authorised to state that Mr. W. T. Best was dismissed from his situation for insubordination, and that on the day fixed for the election of his successor a letter was received from him, making overtures for a re-engagement, which the Council did not feel disposed to entertain."

This would appear grave enough at first blush. "Dismissed" is an awkward word, and "insubordination" is another. Mr. Best depends as much upon private repute as upon

professional ability for maintaining the position he enjoys; and the paragraph in question was likely to compromise both, through the medium of vague insinuation. The Editor of *John Bull* (Dr. Biber) had already inserted it in the columns of that journal (our only motive for not rejecting it, or at least for publishing it otherwise than as an advertisement); and it was therefore natural that Mr. Best should step forward in his own defence. A careful perusal of the correspondence below - to which we are glad to afford all the publicity in our power - will, or we are much mistaken, exonerate Mr. Best altogether, and win him rather the approval than the condemnation of those who would not willingly see the art of music degraded in the person of one of its most eminent professors.

ROYAL PANOPTICON, LEICESTER SQUARE
To the Editor of the *Musical World*.

SIR, - As your columns are always open to the exposure of injustice, I am induced to write a few lines respecting an authorized announcement in a weekly paper to the effect that "Mr. W. T. Best was dismissed from his situation as organist to the Panopticon for insubordination, and that on the day fixed for the", etc.. As regards the first part of the paragraph, the manager of this place of amusement (Rev. E. J. Biber) desired me, in addition to my duties, to play an organ piece each evening at ten o'clock, after the business of the programme had been concluded, and while visitors were leaving the building, suggesting, oddly enough, that Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" would be an appropriate piece. This derogatory and unreasonable service I declined to perform, thereby not suffering the art which I profess to be degraded, as well as preserving my own self-respect.

With regard to being dismissed, I have only to state that the Council are in possession of my letter of the month of May, in which I state "If you are, etc., I shall tender my resignation".

The concluding statement of the paragraph is *false*. I was requested by the Manager, and a highly influential member of the Council, through one of the shareholders (whose letter I append), to make overtures for a re-engagement. I have only to add that, finding the institution was encouraging the assumption that I was still engaged, by not announcing the change that had taken place, I thought it my duty to make the public, the profession, and my friends acquainted with the truth - the only way of doing which efficiently was that to which I resorted.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. T. BEST

The above in every respect dignified and straightforward letter was accompanied by the following correspondence, which, at Mr. Best's desire, we lay before our readers:-

[COPY]

To the President and Members of Council
of the Royal Panopticon

London, April 25th, 1855.

GENTLEMEN, - As the Rev. Dr. Biber, Manager of this Institution, has endeavoured to impose a duty upon me which I consider derogatory to myself, I beg to lay the matter before you. He wishes me to play an organ piece every night at ten o'clock, after the business of the programme is fulfilled, and while visitors are leaving the building. I have offered to play this music at any other time in the morning or evening programme that might be fixed upon, but the Rev. Dr. Biber would not hear of it, and persisted in his unreasonable request.

This "playing the people out" was to have commenced on Monday night, but I refused to comply till your decision could be obtained, and now I leave the matter in your hands. Should, however, you decide that an organ piece be played at this time, and under the circumstances mentioned, I shall be compelled to place my resignation in your hands.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

W. T. BEST

Royal Panopticon of Science and Art,
Leicester Square

25th April, 1855.

SIR, - In reply to your letter of yesterday, addressed to the President, I am directed to say that the Council entire coincide with the orders given by the Rev. Dr. Biber, and alluded to therein, and it is their wish that the same should be carried out.

In regard to the leave of absence for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the Council see no objection, providing a fitting substitute be provided by you.

I am, sir, Your's obediently,

T. J. BROWN, Secretary

W. T. Best Esq.

Royal Panopticon of Science and Art,
Leicester Square,

27th April, 1855.

SIR, - Dr. Biber desires I will call your attention to his order, requiring you to play a piece of music at the close of the evening's entertainment, and also to my letter of 25th

inst., in reply to yours's addressed to the President.

I am, sir, your's obediently,

T. J. BROWN, Secretary

W. T. Best, Esq.

Royal Panopticon of Science and Art,
Leicester Square.

3rd May, 1855.

SIR, - I am directed to forward to you the enclosed minute of a meeting of the Council held yesterday (May 2nd), and remain, sir, your's obediently,

T. J. BROWN, Secretary.

Mr. W. T. Best.

[COPY OF MINUTE]

"Ordered - that the Secretary write to Mr. Best, to the following effect, viz.: that as he has not performed on the organ at the times specified by Dr. Biber, and subsequently in two letters from the Council through the Secretary, or taken any notice of the said letters, his engagement be considered to terminate from the 3rd May."

The *Musical World* concludes by applauding Best for '...the independence he has shown...', and hoping that '...his example may act beneficially elsewhere...'. In the issue of the 30th June (Vol.xxxiii, No.26:405&406), letters of support for both Best *and* the management of the Royal Panopticon were published. Both writers, however, use the dispute as the basis for further complaint, one against the low status of the church organist, the other against the editorial policy of the *Musical World*. A comment on the affair was published in *Punch*.

.....Not satisfied with Mr. Best's scholarly exhibition of the varied powers of the grand organ, by the performance of a series of compositions to visitors who listen, the directors of the establishment call upon a gentleman and musician to "play the people out". He is to accompany the shuffling of feet, the racing down stairs, the calls of parties "to keep together", the requests "not to shove", the squabble for canes, parasols, and umbrellas, and the recitative in which cabs are summoned to the door. And when the last lounge is out, the gentleman and musician may leave off. But this is not all. The direction is good enough to select a composition fit to be applied to this noble art-purpose - and they select Mendelssohn's "Bridal March", which, as everybody knows, is just the thing to be

trampled to pieces by a crowd of weary sight-seers, anxious to escape. If the directors could get a Raphael, they would in the same spirit, lay it down as a door-mat for the greater luxury of their departing patrons..... (reprinted in the *Musical World*, Vol.xxxiii, No.27, 7th July 1855:443)

This was not to be the only occasion on which W. T. Best would have a brush with authority on a question of principle concerned with the dignity of his art. It is also indicative of his standing within the musical profession that he was able to take such a stand, and receive support not only from the musical press but also from periodicals such as *Punch*.

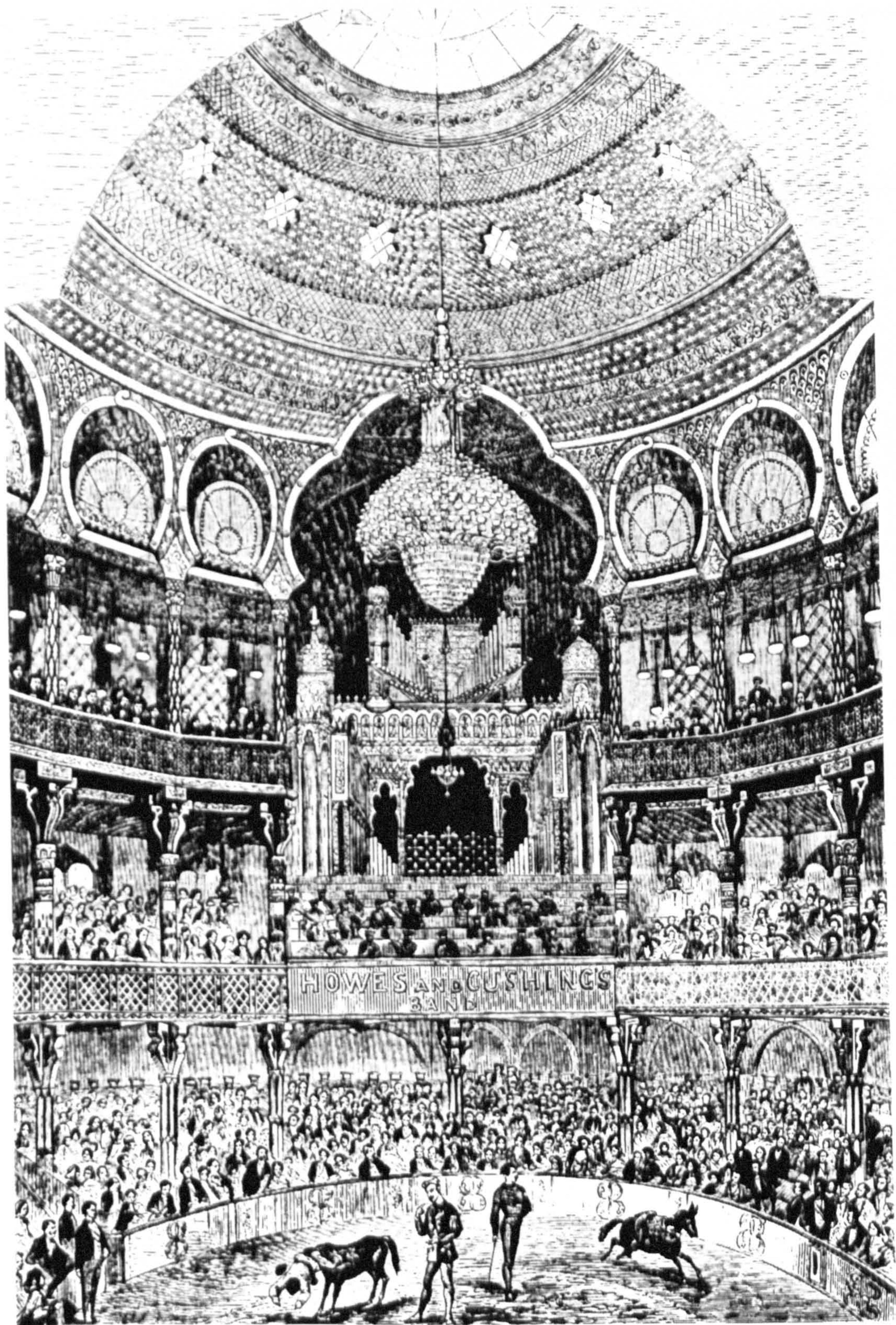
(h) The Failure of the Royal Panopticon

It must have given W. T. Best a certain amount of satisfaction to write, some forty years later - '...The Panopticon possessed a royal charter, and I may observe, did not long survive a course of clerical management...' (Best, MO, No.211, 1st April 1895:425). In the *Musical World* of the 9th August 1856 (Vol.xxxiv, No.32:501) it was announced that:

THE ROYAL PANOPTICON, we learn from several quarters, has turned out a failure, and is to be sold by public auction next month. There is a report that Cardinal Wiseman is anxious to purchase it, to convert it to a Roman Catholic Cathedral; while the present proprietors advertise it as being extremely eligible for a theatre.

The failure appears to have been the result of poor management (*Survey of London*, Vol.xxxiv, 1966:495).

The cost of the building and furnishings was estimated at over £80,000, but the building was bought in May 1857 for £9,000 by the showman, E. T. Smith. It was re-opened on the 3rd April 1858 as the Alhambra Palace. Under Smith's management the building became a centre for circus performances, ballet and music hall. In 1870, the licence for dancing was revoked, after a performance by five ladies of the 'Parisian Quadrille'. This dance was better known as the 'Can-Can', and it was alleged that one of the performers '...had raised her foot higher than her



81. Under E. T. Smith's management the Alhambra became a centre for circus performances, ballet and music hall.

head several times towards the public...'. There was a fire in 1882, which, however, did not damage the frontage. The theatre was rebuilt, and opened again a year later. The music and dancing licence was regained, and spectacular variety and ballet performances became the main feature. By the 1930's the Alhambra was used occasionally for film performances, and in 1936 it was purchased by Oscar Deutsch, the head of Odeon Cinemas. As the Alhambra, its final use was as a film-set on the 8th October 1936. The building was then demolished, and in its place a simple, polished black granite structure - the Odeon Cinema - was built.

The organ was first-of-all sold to St. Paul's Cathedral, where it was re-erected in the south transept, but without its Moorish-style case. W. T. Best remembered '...the organist and deputy organist (Messrs. Goss and Cooper) accompany the singing of immense congregations at the evening service...' (MO, No.211, 1st April 1895:425). After this it was again sold, and installed in the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, Bristol, c1873. Dr. S. S. Wesley was the consultant on this occasion, and ordered that the organ, which had been among the first to be tuned to equal temperament, to be re-tuned in unequal temperament; which comes as no surprise in view of the comments he had made about the instrument (MS, Vol.i, No.23, 1st July 1863:337). W. T. Best himself continues the story:

The authorities had engaged me to give the opening recital, and in the program [sic] was Mendelssohn's First Organ Sonata, which, as is well known, bristles with many sudden excursions into "Forbidden keys", an entire movement being in A flat major. On learning the state of affairs, I refused to play; and after requesting a member of the committee, musically inclined, to listen to a few passages of the sonata, he at once agreed that the sound-effect hardly resembled the music of the spheres, and soon succeeded in reversing the eccentric cathedral organist's tuning notions. So the unfortunate organ underwent another operation, and after I had seen the diversified country between Liverpool and Clifton twice over, the delayed recital took place..... (MO, No.211, 1st April 1895:425)

Church Organist in London

Although Best was establishing his reputation in London as a concert organist, whilst there, he also held appointments as a church organist.

(a) St. Martin-in-the-Fields

In 1854, Thomas Forbes Walmisley (1783-1866) retired, on a pension, from the post of organist at the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. In the same year, a new organ by Messrs. Bevington, was installed. The inauguration of this instrument took place on 30th November, the organist on that occasion being E. J. Hopkins.⁷ The *Musical World* of 13th January 1855 (Vol.xxxiii, No.2:21) announced that '...Mr. W. T. Best has been appointed organist of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields...'. Once again, Best was to preside at the console of a new organ. With forty-nine stops, spread over three keyboards, it was one of the largest in London.⁸ However, neither tonally nor mechanically could the instrument compare with advanced concert instruments, such as that at the Royal Panopticon. The *Musical World* (in the person of Henry Smart) regarded the organ as a 'failure'.⁹ Best was only at the church for a short while, and little can be discovered about his time there. One interesting piece of information concerning the post can be gained from a letter to the *Musical World* (Vol.xxxii, No.21, 27th May 1854:353&354):

To the Editor of the *Musical World*

DEAR SIR,-

I beg to call attention to an advertisement in the *Morning Herald*, of Saturday, for an organist to St Martin's, Trafalgar-Square. The duties are - three full services every Sunday, Good Friday, and Christmas Day, besides attendance every Saint's Day, for which the remuneration is silyly stated as "commencing at fifty pounds per annum".

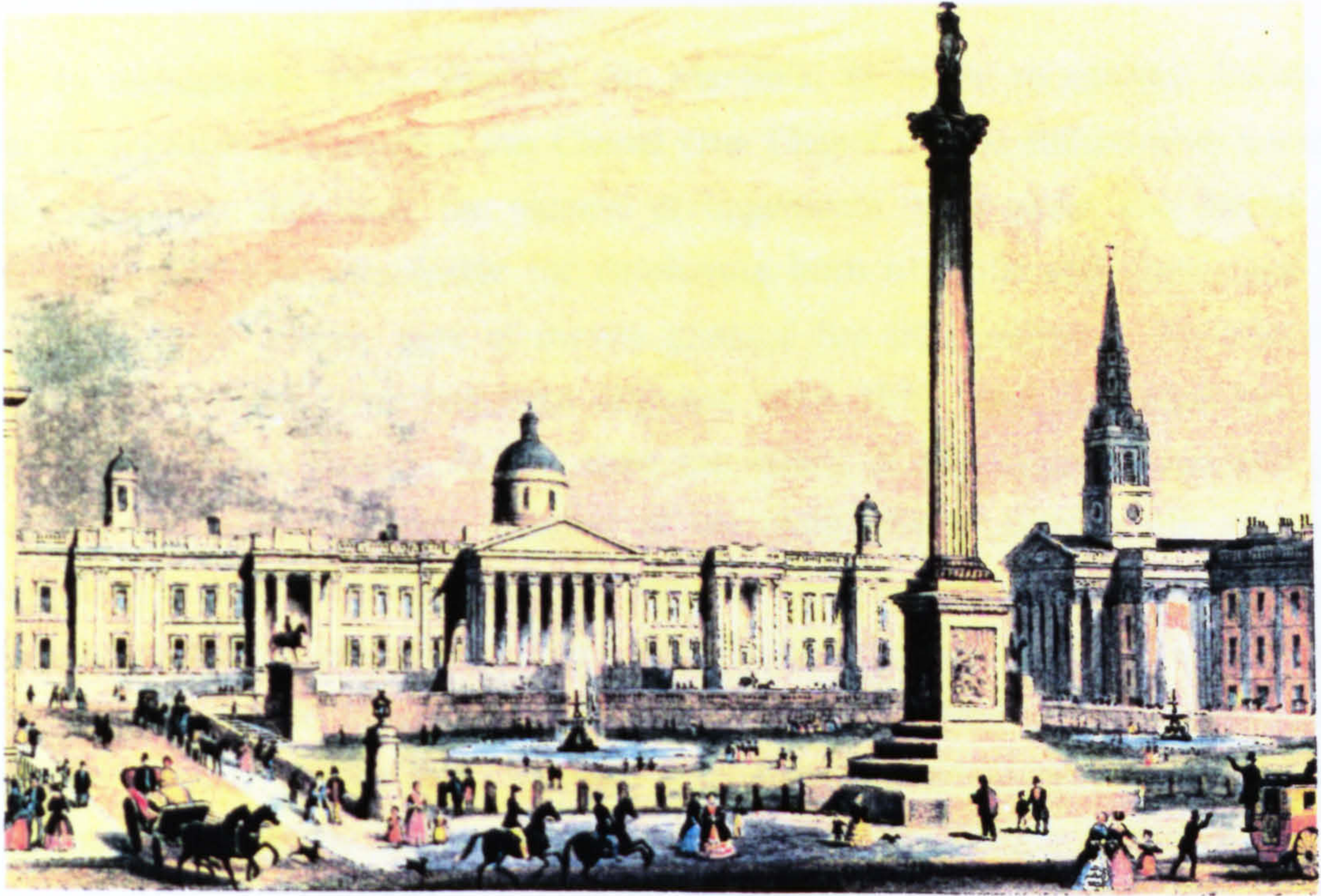
Understanding that the organist's salary at this church had been fixed at the more commensurate sum of £80, I have inquired particulars, and learn that the present organist [Thomas Forbes Walmisley] is to be pensioned off, as a reward for long and faithful service, with £30 per annum, and this, during his lifetime, is to be deducted from the organist's salary, making it £50 pro tem.. How kind and considerate the pensioning of a faithful servant sounds! but how easy a thing it is to be liberal, when we can manage it without dipping into our pockets! There is an old saying about robbing Peter to pay Paul - your readers may find its present application.

Yours, very truly

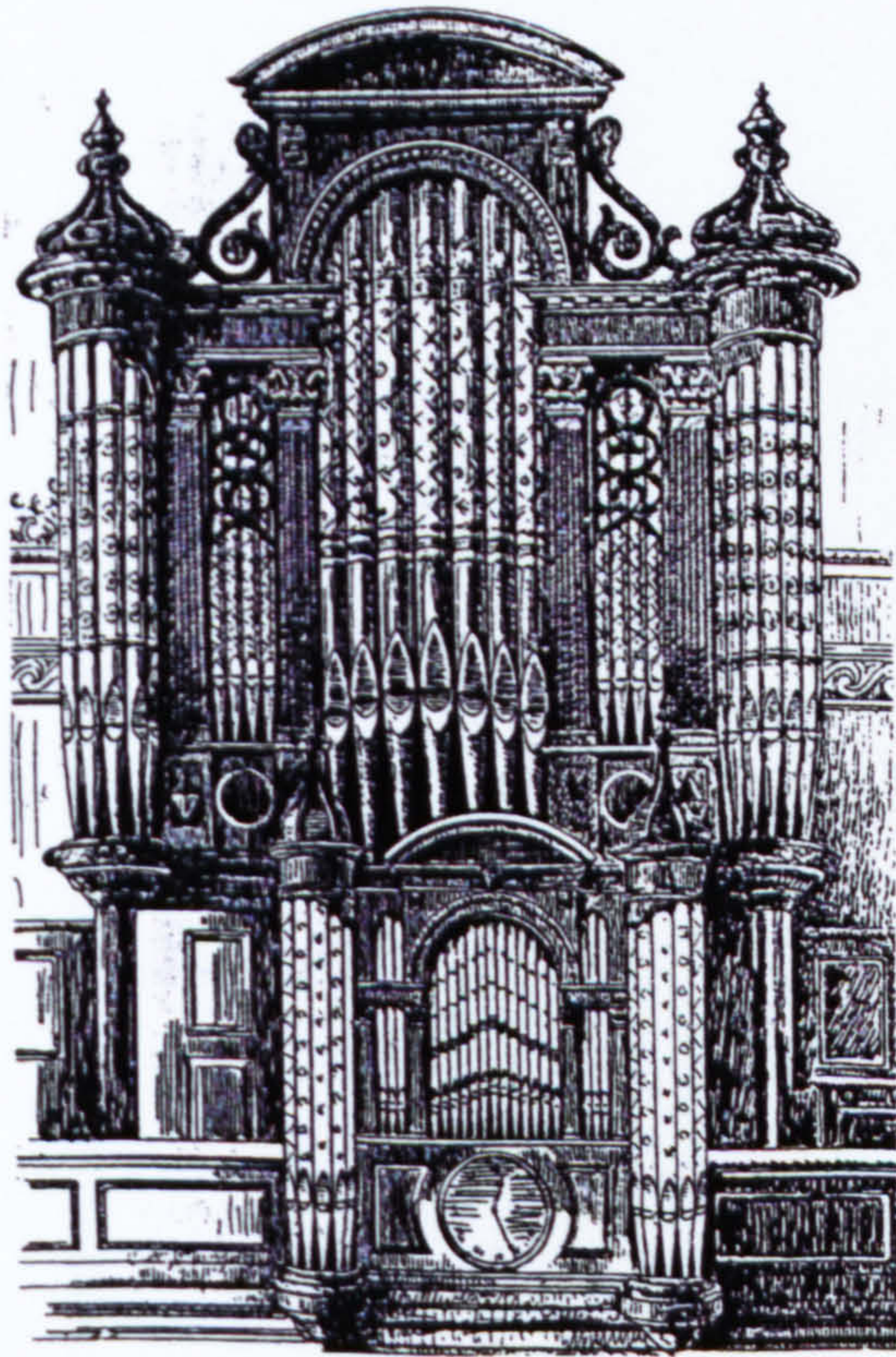
JUSTITIA

May 22nd 1854

[original in colour]



82. Trafalgar Square and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, c1850.



83. The Organ in St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 1854 [Drawing by H. T. Lilley]

(b) Lincoln's Inn Chapel

In midsummer 1855, Best left St. Martin's, in order to succeed Josiah Pittman as organist at Lincoln's Inn Chapel (the Chapel of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn). At this time, the musical arrangements were under the charge of a Mr. Novello, who was responsible for employing both organist and choir, and for paying them out of a lump sum of money granted for this purpose. Novello had an argument with Pittman, who had been organist since 1852, and dismissed him, appointing Best in his stead. At this time the salary of the organist was £63 per annum, and that of an ordinary member of the choir, £42. After a few weeks Best left the position, and following this, the Inn decided that the post of organist and choirmaster should be combined. They also decided that all members of the choir and the organist should be appointed by the Inn as employees in their own right and be paid directly by the Inn. Pittman was re-appointed as both organist and choirmaster, and, shortly afterwards, Novello left the Inn (Segar 1988).¹⁰

CHAPTER 8

THE RETURN TO LIVERPOOL

.....a better appointment, we think, could not have been made.....

(Musical Times, Vol.vii, 1st September 1855:109)

Whilst still at the Royal Panopticon, W. T. Best wrote to the Liverpool Law Courts Committee about possible uses for the recently completed St. George's Hall. On the 12th February 1855, the Committee resolved that '...Mr. Best be informed that the Committee are engaged in making regulations for the use of the hall for musical purposes which will be communicated to him when decided upon...' (Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:387). At a meeting on the 21st April 1855, it was further resolved '...that Mr. Best be requested to give his performance on the Organ on Tuesday evening the first of May...' (Minutes 1848-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:402). This explains why Best needed leave-of-absence from his duties at the Royal Panopticon for three days. At this recital he played the following programme:

Part 1 - Organ Music

Grand Offertoire, Op.35	LÉFEBURE-WÉLY
Organ Sonata, No.2	MENDELSSOHN
Flute Concerto	RINCK
Pastorale and Fuga	J. S. BACH
Organ Concerto, No.6	HANDEL
Extempore	W. T. BEST

Part 2 - Miscellaneous

Overture to <i>Preciosa</i>	WEBER
Andante con variazione (Septet)	BEETHOVEN
Marche du Sacre	MEYERBEER
Overture, Op.24	MENDELSSOHN
<i>The National Anthem</i> , with Variations & Finale	W. T. BEST

(Mansfield 1918:218)

The audience numbered over 2,000, and the concert received a favourable review in the *Musical World*:

.....The most attractive piece in the programme was the concerto by Rinck, in which the effects of the flute stop, admirably treated by Mr. Best, created the heartiest applause. The sonata of Mendelssohn, an exquisite specimen of musical art, and the massive compositions of Bach, Beethoven and Händel, were played by Mr. Best with that finish and chastity of style which have elevated him to so high a rank in his profession. In the first part he extemporised for some time, the subject being a sort of "storm piece". The Marche from the *Prophète* excited the customary enthusiasm, and the variations on the "National Anthem" brought the performance to a pleasant termination..... (MW Vol.xxxiii, No.18, 15th May 1855:285&286)

Earlier in the year, the *Musical Times* (quoting the *Manchester Examiner*), had reported that:

.....It is the intention of the St. George's Hall Committee, if they obtain the sanction of the Council, to appoint an organist at a liberal salary, whose duties will comprise two evening performances for the amusement of the working population of the town, who will be admitted at a charge of three pence; and two morning performances to which the admission will be a shilling..... (MT Vol.vi, 15th February 1855:312)

On the 9th April 1855, Henry Willis sent a letter to the Committee urging them to appoint a first-class organist to the post (Carrington 1981:15&16). At meetings of the Committee on the 2nd and 9th of May (after Best's recital), the salary of the organist was fixed at £300 per annum, and a shortlist of candidates drawn up:

Wednesday 2nd May 1855 and continued by adjournment on 9th May 1855.

It was moved as an Ammendment by Mr. Picton

Seconded by Mr. Hodson - that the proceedings of the Courts of Law and St. George's Hall Committee be approved except so much of thereof as recommends that the salary of the Organist be £250 per annum and that the salary of the Organist be fixed at £300 per annum -

And a shew of hands being taken the ammendment was declared to be carried and became itself the original motion.....

Whereupon it was resolved

That the proceedings of the Courts of Law and St. George's Hall Committee be approved except so much as thereof as recommends that the salary of the Organist be £250 per annum, and that the salary of the Organist be fixed at £300 per annum, and that it be referred to the Courts of Law and St. George's Hall Committee to recommend proper persons for appointment as Organist and for the permanent staff.....

The Committee proceeded to the consideration of the appointment of the staff for the building.

1st The Organist this appointment having been fully considered and the Committee feeling the importance of selecting an Organist of undoubted talent

Resolved

That the appointment shall be open to partial competition and that the following candidates be informed that they will be invited to play on the Organ on certain days to be arranged hereafter, that the salary is fixed at £300 per annum; that the appointment will be during the pleasure of the Council, and that those candidates who have not yet forwarded testimonials to the Committee be requested to do so as early as possible. The travelling expenses of the candidates will be allowed to an amount not exceeding £10.

[withdrawn]

[Asks for audition(?)]

[Withdrawn]

[do]

Dr. Wesley

Mr. Best

Mr. T. Tallis Trimmell

Mr. James Stimpson

Mr. George Dixon

Chesterfield

Edgbaston

Retford

	Mr. J. T. Harris	Manchester
	Mr. Glover	Cheetham Hill
[Withdrawn]	Mr. E. J. Monk	Abingdon
	Mr. C. J. Vincent	Houghton-le-Spring
	Mr. Rea	London
	Mr. Grosvenor	Dudley

(Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:404, 417&418)

Of these candidates, Dr. S. S. Wesley (the designer of the organ and the musician who had formally opened the instrument) and W. T. Best (who had also given a public recital) emerged as favourites. H. Heathcote Statham was a boy in Liverpool at the time.

.....Dr. Wesley had formally opened the organ with two very fine performances.....and it was generally supposed that he would be permanently engaged, as the admitted leading organ-player of the day, when another party in the Town Council.....brought forward Mr. Best, organist of the Panopticon and of Lincoln's Inn Chapel, as their candidate. He had been formerly in Liverpool as organist at a church, and also, for a time of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, and no doubt had personal friends to support him. Hence rose a battle royal and much newspaper polemics: we were all *Wesleyites* or *Bestites*..... (Statham 1909:217&218)

However, for whatever reason, S. S. Wesley withdrew his name from the list of candidates. The Minutes of the Law Courts Committee provide no information about the competitive element of the selection process. Some details can, perhaps, be gained from a letter published in the *Musical World*:

.....the various candidates (Amongst whom are some of the best organists in England), will have to play before four judges, - Messrs. Sterndale Bennett, Attwood, Walmsley, and Molique:^[1] also that the candidates will not be allowed to select any composition for their own performance; but will have to play a prelude and fugue proposed by the judges.....It seems to me that the organist appointed should be a thorough musician as well as a clever performer; and the only way for the judges to arrive at a knowledge of his fitness for the post will be to hear him perform a certain quantity of music selected by himself; - they will discern whether he possesses the taste necessary to enable him to perform an attractive programme, the ability to perform the music when selected; and the general knowledge required to lead him to use the best combination of stops to produce "effect"..... (MW Vol.xxxiii, No.31, 4th August 1855:504)

As this letter was published after an organist had been appointed, it is possible that the original selection procedure was adhered to, or, in view of the wording of the following Law Courts Committee minute, not used at all.

Friday 20th July 1855.

The Committee having proceeded to the further consideration of the appointment of Organist
Resolved

That under the circumstances of the case it be recommended to the Council to appoint Mr.
Best the Organist of St. George's Hall at a salary of £300 per annum and that other
candidates be informed of this appointment.....(Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:422)

However, at a meeting of the full Council, held on 1st August 1855:

It was moved as an ammendment by Mr. Robertson Gladstone seconded by Mr. Beckwith
That the appointment of Mr. Best as Organist of St. George's Hall be not confirmed
The Council divided when there appeared

For the ammendment	14
Against it	18

And the ammendment being lost

It was resolved

That Mr. Best be and is hereby appointed during the pleasure of the Council Organist of
St. George's Hall at the Salary of £300 per annum subject to the terms of the Resolution of
the Law Courts and St. George's Hall Committee of the 11th day of August last.....

(Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:424)

At a meeting of the Law Courts Committee on the 7th August 1855, the Town
Clerk was requested to inform Best of this decision, and his letter of acceptance was
read at the meeting on the 10th August.

98 Regent Street, London.
August 8th 1855.

Sir,

I have received the official notice of my appointment as Organist of St. George's Hall from
the Town Clerk, and am now concluding my business arrangements in London, so as to
come down to Liverpool in the course of two or three days. I should be greatly obliged if
you could send me word of the date intended for my first Organ Concert. The intended
use of the Hall for other purposes, such as concerts of a popular character, has received
much of my attention, and I shall be able to communicate personally my views on the
subject very shortly

Allow me to add that I feel deeply sensible of the honor [sic] of the "unanimous
recommendation" of the Law Courts Committee, as passed on the 21st ult:-

I remain Sir,
Your obedient servant

W. T. BEST

To the Chairman of the Law Courts Committee, Liverpool.
(Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:427)

The appointment was greeted with approval in the musical press:

.....LIVERPOOL - Mr. W. T. Best has been appointed organist of St. George's Hall, and a better appointment, we think, could not have been made..... (MT Vol.vii, 1st September 1855:109)

PART 3

THE PLACE AND THE PERSON

CHAPTER 9

ST. GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL

.....It is worthy of Ancient Athens, the architecture is so simple and magnificent.....
(Queen Victoria, 1851)

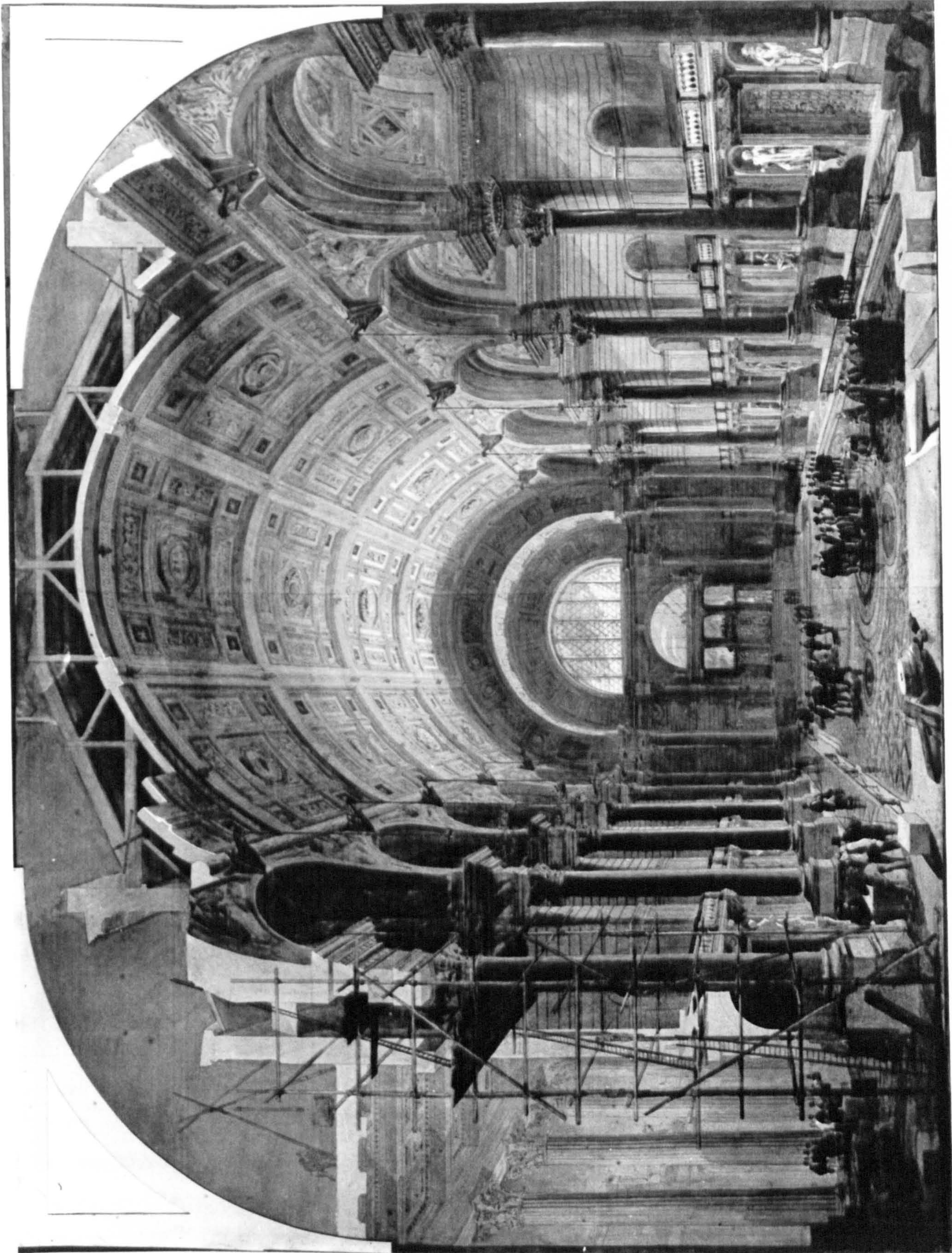
.....the finest neo-Grecian building in England and one of the finest in the world.....
(Sir Nikolaus Pevsner)

The second foundation stone for the building which was to combine the Liverpool Law Courts with a concert hall – St. George's Hall – was laid in 1841. The building of this great edifice occupied the following thirteen years. By 1851 the fabric of the building was completed, and in the December of that year the Law Courts were opened. The hall was not finished until 1854. The original architect, Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, had died in 1847, and work had continued under the supervision of the Surveyor, John Weightman, and his Clerks of Work, David Highes and William Hawley, until Professor Charles Robert Cockerell (1788–1863)¹ was appointed as architect to oversee the completion of the Hall (Carrington 1981:6,8&13). As the building neared completion, a description was printed in the *Liverpool Journal* and subsequently reprinted in the *Musical World* of 3rd December 1853 (Vol.xxxi, No.49:770&771). The interior of this '...truly magnificent building...' and '...noble structure...' was described in some detail², and the writer looked forward to the time when '...this handsome and noble building will be fully exposed to public view...'

The date set for the opening of the Hall was during September 1854. At first it was thought that no music would feature at the opening '...the committee having found that...they will be unable to engage sufficient talent...' (MW Vol.xxxii, No.14, 8th April 1854:240). However, the *Musical Times* of the 15th May 1854 (Vol.vi:64) reported that the choral forces of the area were being assembled for the event, and the issue of the 1st September (Vol.vi:170) revealed that the opening celebrations would include a three-day music festival (18th–20th September). Clara Novello was to be the 'prima donna', Sir Henry Bishop the conductor, and Dr. S. S. Wesley the organist.

The opening ceremony took place on Monday the 18th September:

.....a crowd of no less than 30,000 besieged all the avenues to the Hall, while the windows of every house, from top to bottom, were crowded with curious and anxious spectators. The scene outside was sufficiently exciting, but that inside was still more so. About 2,000 were assembled in the hall, among whom were the Bishop of Chester, the Earl of Derby, Earl Sefton, and other eminent persons, who sat close to the places appointed for the Mayor and Corporation. The orchestra, towered over by the gigantic organ, and filled to the extremities with members of the band and chorus, under the direction of Sir Henry Bishop, occupied the entire breadth of the hall on the north side,



84. *St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Watercolour by Goodchild [Walker Art Gallery]*

and looked very imposing. As soon as the Mayor and corporation were placed, the conductor waved his baton, and the band played the symphony of the National Anthem. The first solo verse was sung by Mr. Sims Reeves.....The verse in duet with Herr Formes, and the last solo by Madame Clara Novello.....After the National Anthem, all the audience remained standing, and the Bishop of Chester delivered a prayer for the prosperity of Liverpool, and invoked a blessing upon the new building. The Mayor then rose, and in a very few words declared that the hall was opened, and stated for what purposes and uses. The whole ceremony scarcely occupied more than twenty minutes..... (MW Vol.xxxii, No.38, 23rd September 1854:625)

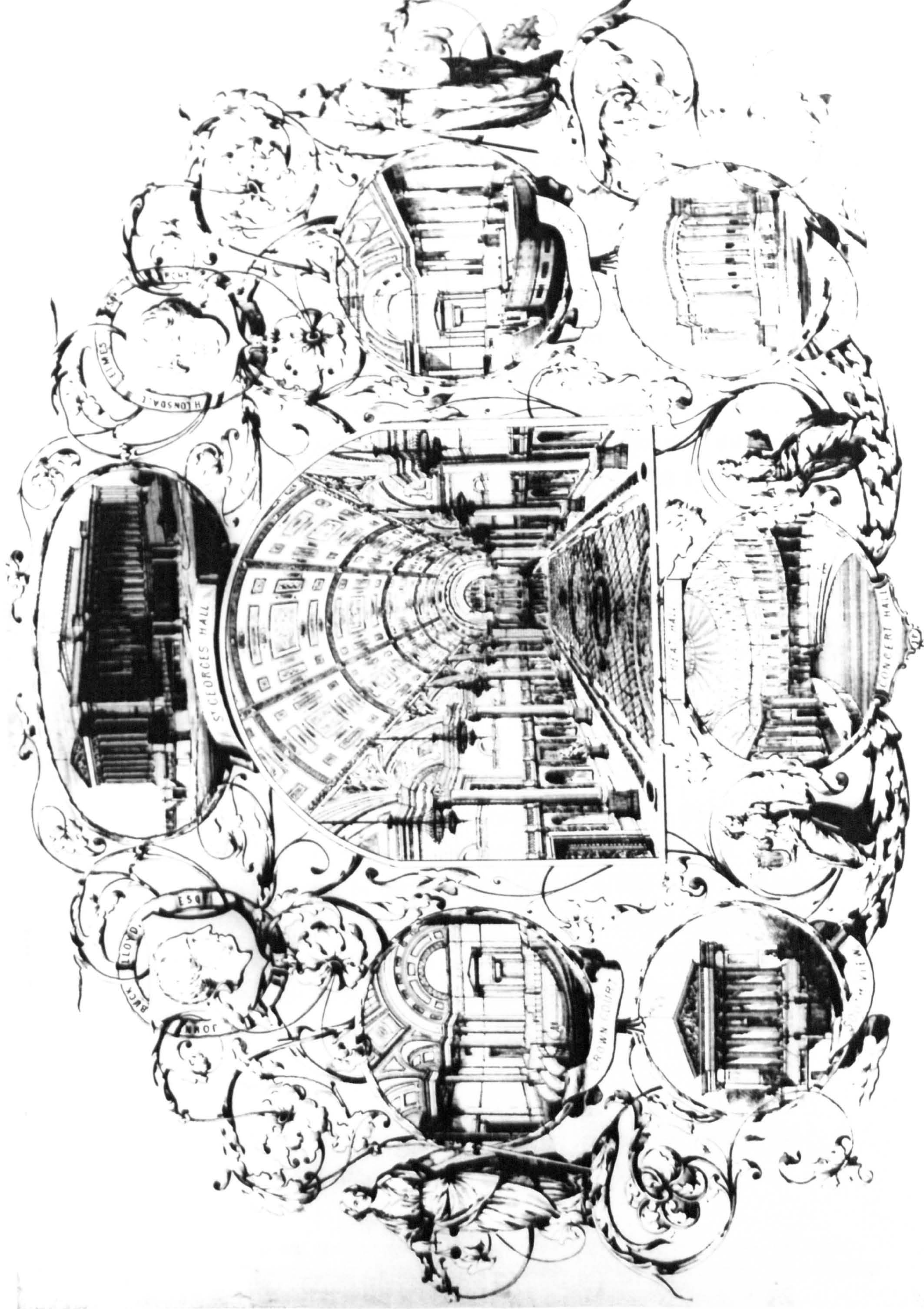
After the opening ceremony Handel's *Messiah* was performed. The *Musical World* (Vol.xxxii, No.38, 23rd September 1854:625&626) commented on the acoustical properties of the hall, and declared that the five deep recesses on each side wall were '...inimical to the musical effect which springs from the great masses of voices and instruments, and must therefore militate against the pretensions of St. George's Hall, when compared with other large areas devoted to musical performances...'. The evening concert which followed was not well attended, the hall being '...not more than one-third filled...', which presented '...an aspect of dreary and desolate splendour...' (MW Vol.xxxii, No.38, 23rd September 1854:627). The *Musical World* attributed the poor attendance to the high prices for admission, and went on to describe the programme as being '...of the London-Wednesday-Exeter-Hall stamp - longitudinal, scraggy, crooked, and obsolete...'.

On Tuesday the 19th of September, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was performed in the morning, with another Miscellaneous Concert in the evening, but attendances were still low. There was an improvement on Wednesday, when, in the morning, Parts 1 and 2 of Haydn's *Creation* and Spohr's *Last Judgement* were given. A 'People's Concert' with tickets at half-a-crown was given on the Wednesday evening to conclude the Festival. All the performances were in aid of local charities. The *Musical World* (Vol.xxxii, No.38, 23rd September 1854:629) wryly set out the profit and loss account³, and estimated that only five or six hundred pounds would be available for the charities, which it described as a '...poor presentation for such a town as Liverpool on such an occasion...'. The magazine also branded the Festival as an '...unmistakable failure...' and predicted that '...whoever hears of a Music Festival at Liverpool...will be tempted to smile...' and doubted if '...for many long day, we shall see the name of Liverpool connected with art...' (MW, Vol.xxxii, No.38, 23rd September 1854:625).⁴

This was not a very auspicious start for a hall which was to become a 'Mecca' for music-lovers over the next four decades. Although not the actual Town Hall of Liverpool, St. George's Hall fulfilled that rôle, as an embodiment of civic pride, and as a centre for music-making. Of crucial importance to the musical activities at the hall was the organ, built and installed by Henry Willis, which was the largest and most mechanically advanced instrument in the world.

The Organ in St. George's Hall

At their visit to the Great Exhibition, the Law Court's Committee decided to employ the young Henry Willis to build the organ for St. George's Hall.⁵ In 1846, Dr. S. S. Wesley the consultant retained by the Committee had produced a scheme⁶ for a large organ. This design was eccentric and wasteful, and may well have been the scheme that W. T. Best had in mind when, in 1881, he wrote '...The less said about the late Dr. Wesley's vagaries in organ construction...the better. He managed to render English organ-building art ridiculous in the eyes of Europe...' (MS, 5th March 1881). William Hill described it as '...quite behind the science of Organ Building of the present day and that no builder having a reputation to lose could consent to carry it into execution...' (Carrington 1981:12&13). Hill pinpointed the weaknesses of the design: '...It does not contain a single new invention either in stops or mechanism, but on the contrary appears crowded with duplicate and large scale stops, the only use of which appears to be to swell the number...'. Wesley's plan was essentially an inflation of Hill's scheme for Birmingham Town Hall⁷ of some ten years earlier. His insistence on duplication, large-scale pipes, the use of open wood registers, 2 ft reed stops and a Combination Organ (Thistlethwaite 1990:139) took no account of innovations and improvements made since the Birmingham instrument. Hill had obviously modified his own ideas, and defined Wesley's task as to '...improve upon existing specimens and not to retrograde...'. Wesley's insistence on the old fashioned GG compass for the manuals elicited the following response from the *Musical World* (Vol.xxxii, No.35, 2nd September 1854:582&583): '...Wonders are tolerably common, to be sure, now-a-days, but we confess ourselves wholly unprepared for such an apparition as this in the year 1854...no organ-music, properly so called, requires a lower compass than CC on the keys...'.



86. St. George's Hall, Liverpool [Liverpool City Library]

Sumner (1955:22) is wrong to imply that the final specification of the organ was the work of Willis alone, Wesley only being responsible for the compass and the tuning. Wesley produced his scheme in 1846, five years before Willis secured the contract to build the instrument, and in its finished state the organ had a specification remarkably similar to Wesley's original. One important difference is that Willis provides an independent Solo division for the fourth keyboard, whereas Wesley had recommended a Combination Organ '...To give a selection of stops from the Choir and Swell Organs...' to fulfil a similar purpose. Wesley had envisaged this Combination Organ as having from fifteen to twenty stops, and Willis's solo division had fifteen. Willis carried out Wesley's recommendation of the outmoded GG compass for the keyboards, and also his insistence on tuning the instrument to a form of unequal temperament. Of this S. S. Wesley wrote:

.....When the organ, built at my suggestion for St. George's Hall, Liverpool, approached completion, its builder, Mr. Willis, consulted me about the tuning, and offered to give the equal tuning a fair trial, by tuning one open diapason in the great organ that way, and another by the established mode, and this fair and most carefully conducted trial was most convincing, and placed the equal tuning in the most unfavourable light possible, leaving on my mind not one particle of doubt as to the merits of the question..... (MS, Vol.i, No.23, 1st July 1863:337)

W. T. Best, an ardent advocate of equal temperament, would in later years refer to Wesley's '...insane notion of tuning...' and invoke the names of Bach, Mozart and Mendelssohn '...in their pieces in the keys of F minor, A flat major, and other tonalities...' (MS, 5th March 1881) to support his case. Wesley, however, was content '...to have some good keys and others bad, and avoid the bad in writing and playing as much as possible...' (Sumner 1955:23), which was very much contrary to the spirit of the age.

A description of the organ, as furnished by Wesley and Willis, was published in the *Liverpool Mail* of 19th August 1854,⁸ which ended:

.....To the reciprocal and harmonious effects of Dr. Wesley and Mr. Willis, the town council and the inhabitants are indebted for such an unrivalled instrument; and while the opulence of the corporation has justified such an expenditure, the result is both satisfactory and creditable to the gentlemen who have conducted the erection.

The organ was of immense size, containing one hundred speaking stops spread over four keyboards and pedal. Extensive use was made of the pneumatic lever action, it being applied to the key and pedal action, the mechanism of the swell box and to the 'gold-gilt knobs' (thumb-pistons) placed between the keyboards to facilitate the rapid changing of stops. There were also general-pistons which acted on the stops of the entire instrument. The pedal-board also represented a new departure, being radiating and concave, which was described as '...a most ingenious contrivance of Dr. Wesley's...'.

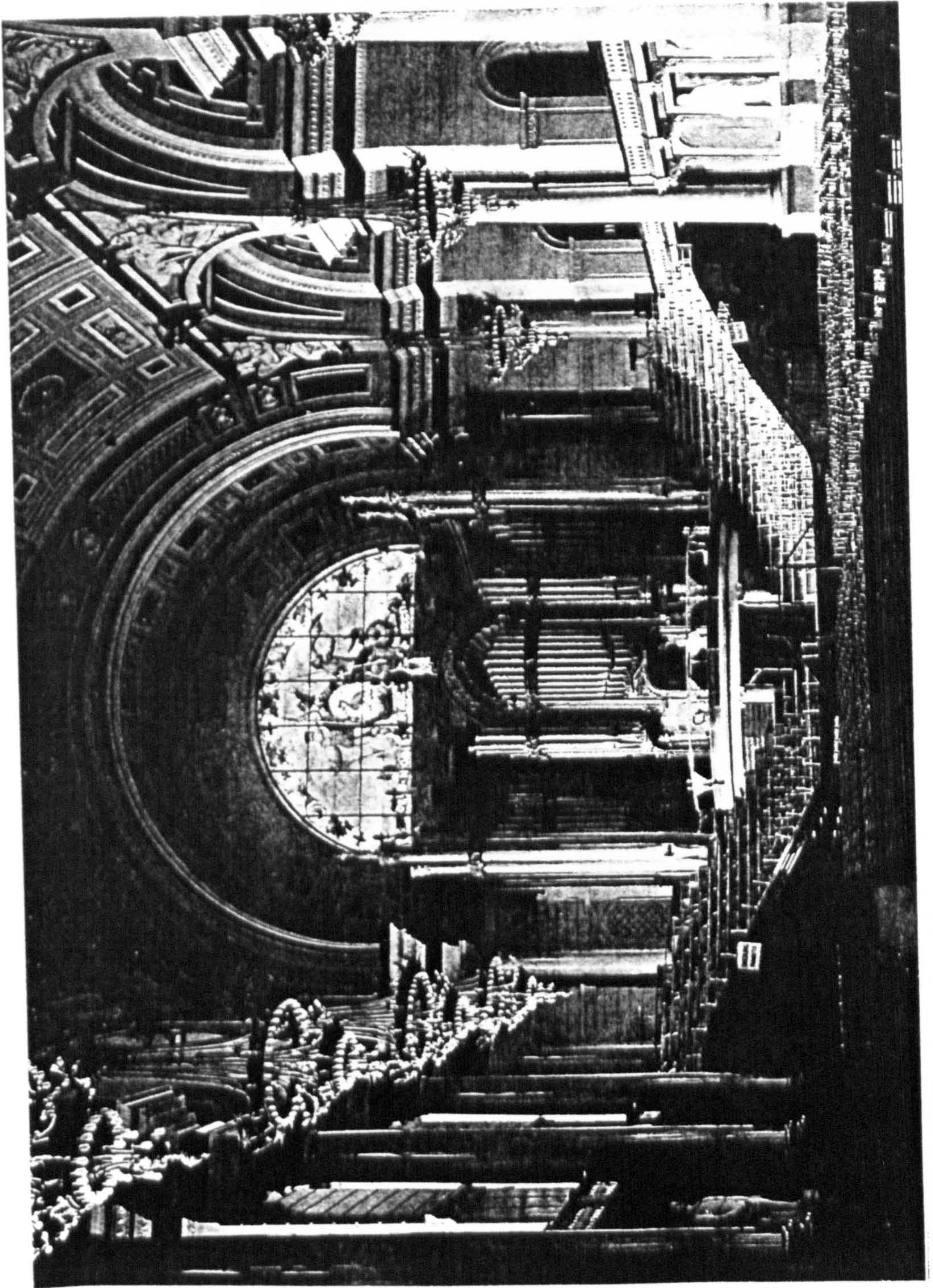
Professor Cockerell's design for an organ-case was approved on the 29th April 1852 at an estimated cost of £1,447, with a further £1,501 for the organ gallery and approaches. In 1853 the firm of Fawcett & Preston were asked to submit a plan and estimate for a steam engine of approximately 8 h.p. to provide the wind for the instrument (Carrington 1981:15).

The *Musical World* (Vol.xxxii, No.34, 26th August 1854:565-567) was critical of the instrument, and drew attention to the weakness in the design - the duplication of registers: '...This great organ, as it now stands, is little better than a slightly improved edition of Dr. Camidge's notable failure at York Minster; and...will be found inferior in effect to some known examples in this country, to say nothing of master-works on the Continent...'.

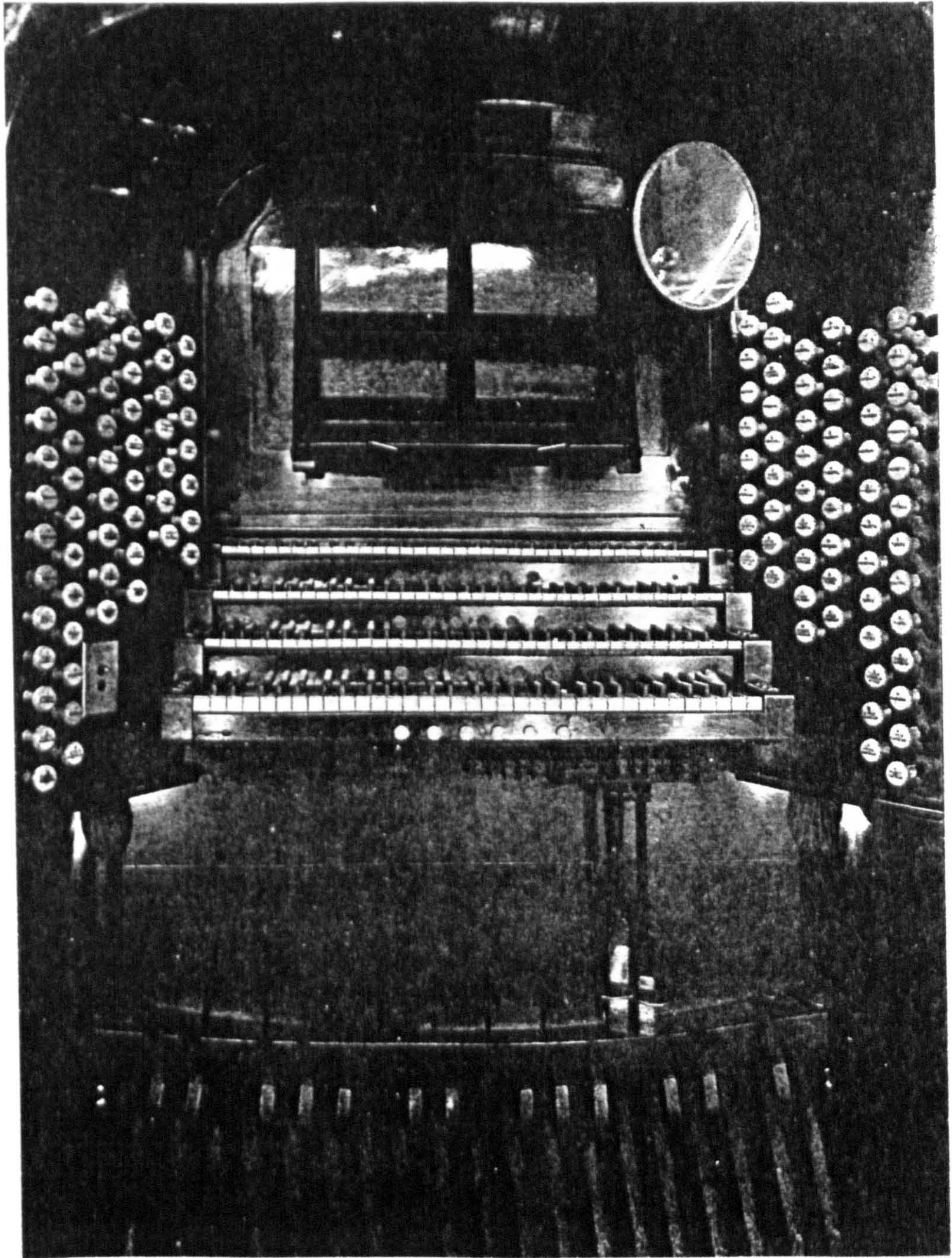
It is likely that the writer of the above account had not actually heard the instrument and was basing his comments on the printed specification only. The *Musical Times* of the 15th February 1855 (Vol.iv:312) announced:

ST. GEORGE'S HALL - The grand organ is now completed, and was tried last night before the mayor and the council.....

In March, Henry Willis himself gave a public demonstration of the instrument. This lasted some two hours, and was attended by 1,500 people who '...frequently expressed their approval...' (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.11, 17th March 1855:166).



87. *The Organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool [Photograph by Gilbert Benham]*



88. *The Original Console of the Organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. The CC compass of the keyboards indicate that the photograph was taken after the 1896 rebuild. [Photograph by Gilbert Benham]*

On the 1st of May W. T. Best give his recital, and on the 29th and 30th May the formal opening of the organ took place, with S. S. Wesley at the console. The programme for the concert on the 29th May was as follows:

PART 1

Inauguration of the Organ.		
The Hundredth Psalm. Played twice.		
(The Audience is invited to sing the Psalm the second time it is played.)		
Fugue	St. Ann's	BACH
Fantasia	Two movements	S. S. WESLEY
Chorus	<i>I will sing unto the Lord</i>	HANDEL
Cantata		BEETHOVEN
Fugue	The Giant	BACH
Air	by Kozeluch	S. S. WESLEY
Andante		MOZART
Overture		SPOHR

PART 2

Chorus	<i>Rex Tremendae</i>	MOZART
Aria	<i>Gratias agimus tibi</i>	GUGLIELMI
Song	<i>Give forth a shout, O Shepherds!</i>	COSTA
Quartet	<i>Benedictus</i>	S. S. WESLEY
(Mrs. Millar, Mr. Hand., Mr. Millar, Mrs. Thomasson)		
Recit and Air	<i>With verdure clad</i>	HAYDN
Anthem	<i>Ascribe unto the Lord</i>	S. S. WESLEY
Recit	<i>Comfort ye</i> (Mr. Millar)	HANDEL
Air	<i>Every valley</i> (Mr. Millar)	
Air	<i>Let the bright seraphim</i>	HANDEL
	(Miss Stott)	
Aria	<i>Sanctum</i>	PERGOLESI
Double Quartet	<i>For he shall give his angels</i>	MENDELSSOHN
Finale, Organ	<i>Hallelujah</i>	HANDEL

(Carrington 1981:42)

The *Musical World* of June 9th 1855 (Vol.xxxiii, No.23:361) carried a review of a demonstration of the instrument, given by Wesley, which probably took place on the 5th June. After criticising the full organ for its lack of character, the reeds for lacking power and brilliancy and the pedal division, the writer continues by praising the Great diapasons, a solo trumpet on the Swell, the Solo clarinet and the Choir flutes.⁹ The comments in this article concerning Wesley's playing of the organ highlight the change of approach to the playing of the instrument taking place at the time.

.....Dr. Wesley appeared, on this occasion, either somewhat to mistrust his instrument, or disinclined to give the rein to his fancy in testing the variety of its capabilities. His performance was, as it ever is, admirably pure, chaste, and masterly; but considering that this is an organ to challenge the world, and that, above all things it is intended as a *concert organ* - (or if not, why place it in St. George's Hall?) - we think he should have done more to display any distinctive character it may happen to possess..... (MW Vol.xxxiii, No.23, 9th June 1855:361)

W. T. Best, the leader of the new generation of players, defended the organ against criticism in the musical press:

To the Editor of the *Musical World*.

SIR - The Liverpool Organ appears to have been made the subject of much premature and adverse criticism in many quarters of late; if, therefore, you can spare room for the following few lines, I shall be much gratified.

I had the pleasure of playing upon it about two months ago, when, although not quite complete, a fair estimate might be made of its merits.

In my opinion, as well as that of some others, perhaps better able to determine critically on the subject, it must be considered a masterpiece, both musically and mechanically, and reflects infinite credit on the artist who built it.

When heard in its integrity, I feel confident the instrument will claim the most unqualified praise from all unbiased judges.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

W. T. BEST

98, Regent Street, Aug. 9th, 1855.

S. S. Wesley 'passed' the completed instrument in a letter to the Law Courts Committee, dated 17th October 1855.

Liverpool
October 17th 1855

I have made a careful inspection of the organ in St. George's Hall for the purpose of ascertaining whether the specification drawn by myself has been faithfully executed by the builder of the organ, and I feel that I may truly and conscientiously certify not only that it has, but, also that the builder has [finished?] the instrument in many important particulars respecting which no specification could be so drawn up as to apply, and which must necessarily depend on the builders integrity and talents.

The organ contains all I had specified in my plan and many inventions by Mr. Willis in addition, and which prove entirely successful and render the instrument wholly without a rival in the facilities afforded the performer for producing the most rapid and various effects, and the tone of the organ is pure, novel and powerful to a degree which those who both know all that has been heretofore done in organ building and who fully understand the peculiar nature of St. George's Hall, in respect to its reverberation of sound, can best appreciate.

The builder of the organ, on requiring of me this certificate, calls my attention to certain circumstances by which he has been put to various unexpected and additional expenses in his construction and erection of the organ in St. George's Hall, and he requests me to add, on this occasion, an opinion on the subject. If, in conformity with his request, I must express an opinion, I beg to declare that I consider the statements Mr. Willis has made to be entitled to confidence.

I sign my name

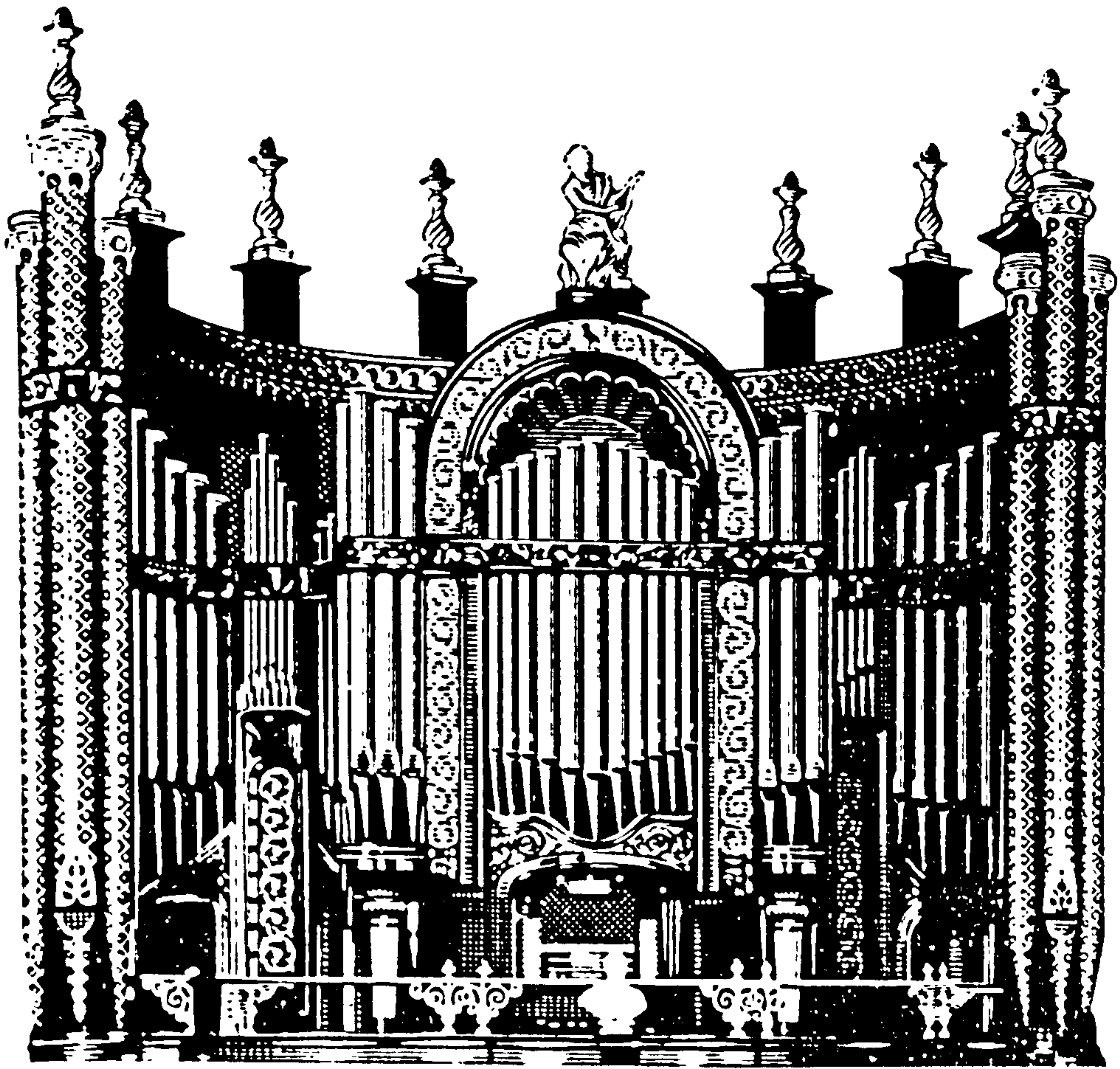
SAMUEL SEBASTIAN WESLEY

To the Law Courts Committee
Liverpool

(Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:437&438)

The contract price of the organ was £6,250 (inclusive of carriage), and Wesley was to be remunerated at the rate of 5% of this price (Carrington 1981:15).

It is to the credit of Henry Willis that he was able to create a great instrument from Wesley's unpromising scheme. Against retrogressive features – the GG manual compass and the unequal temperament – must be set the sheer size, the wide spectrum of colour, and the extensive use of modern technology in the key and stop action, and in the provision of new aids to registration. The St. George's Hall instrument has been described as '...the first modern organ...' (Clutton and Niland 1963:100), which with '...its comprehensiveness and colour spectrum...' offered '...a model for bigger organs throughout the ever-expanding British Empire...' (Williams 1980:175&176).



90. *Professor Cockerell's Organ Case for St. George's Hall, Liverpool.*

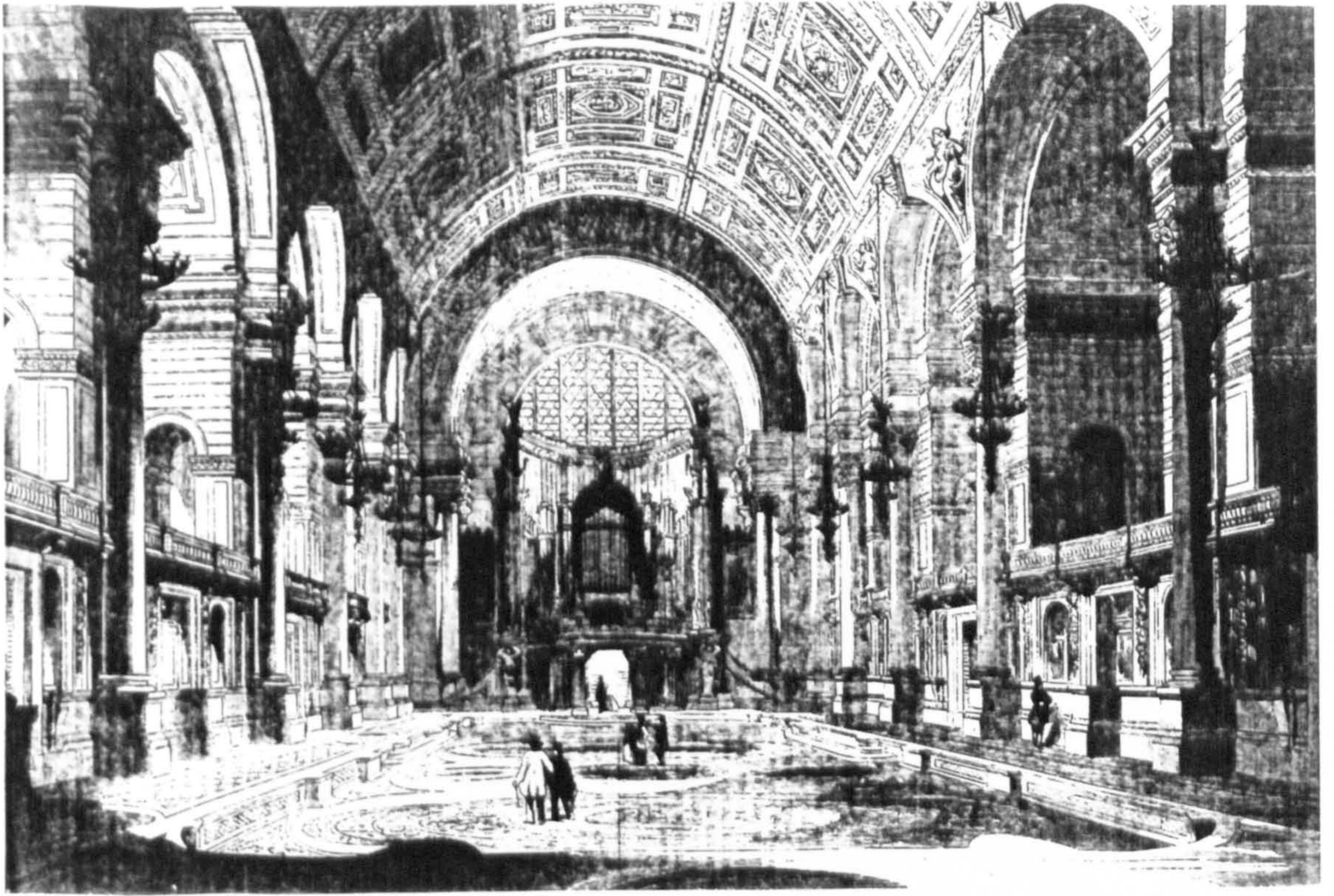
A Victorian Ideal

Although not a Town Hall, St George's Hall fulfilled some of the functions of such a building, including those of magistracy and meetings. As a symbol of civic pride it was without rival. No expense had been spared, the cost of the building being estimated at £300,000 (Cunningham 1981:36). The sculpture for the pediment, designed by Cockerell, alone cost £3,000 (Cunningham 1981:37). St. George's Hall was an embodiment of a Victorian ideal – the combination of art, science and industry. Elmes had produced a design for the building which went far beyond the merely practical and became a work of art in itself, described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as '...the finest neo-Grecian building in England and one of the finest in the world...' (Carrington 1981:5). The architect had envisaged the Great Hall as a vast basilica, with a vista from the back of the crown court at one end to the back of borough court at the other. As he wrote on the 2nd March 1847:

.....When you contemplated the finished structure as it is to be, you stood on the Judge's platform in one Court, your eye glancing along the ranges of ruddy columns on either side in all the richness and strong colour of a foreground; then reposing for a moment in the lofty arched opening communicating with the Hall, whose broad and richly coffered soffit throws a shadow on the grey columns beneath and forms the middle distance, it pierces the atmosphere of the Great Hall, passes the corresponding opening of the other court and finally rests on the other Judge's throne..... (Carrington 1981:7&8)

However, this vista was obscured by the final positioning of the organ by Cockerell. The floor of the Great Hall was of Minton tiles to a design of Professor Ludwig Grüner. There was a competition for sculptured reliefs held in 1882, but carved panels and figures between the columns of the north portico were intended from an early stage, as were free-standing groups at the corners of the podium.

The hall was also a masterpiece of engineering. The enormous size of the Great Hall (169 feet in length, 74 feet wide and 84 feet high, with a total floor area of 1,720 square yards) posed problems over the weight of the ceiling. Sir Robert Rawlinson suggested the use of perforated tiles instead of brick for the vaulting which saved 166 tons of weight (Carrington 1981:7). The employment of hollow bricks reduced the weight of the ceiling from 1,000 tons to 600 tons (Honiball 1907). Dr. D. B. Reid produced an elaborate plan for heating and ventilating the hall.



91. *The Great Hall, St. George's Hall, Liverpool [The Builder, Vol. xiii, 1855]*



92. *One of the doors of St. George's Hall, Liverpool.*

[original in colour]



94. The Great Hall showing the floor of Minton tiles designed by Grüner.

'...an organ to challenge the world...' was how the *Musical World* (Vol.33, No.23, 9th June 1855:361) described the instrument in St. George's Hall. In spite of incorporating some of Wesley's old fashioned ideas, Willis turned the unpromising original scheme into a '...highly successful musical instrument...' (Thistlethwaite 1990:135). This was a musical instrument, moreover, which incorporated the latest applications of technology to organ building – again a combination of art and science. In addition to magistracy and meetings, the Great Hall was intended for musical use, and after the organ was completed, W. T. Best was appointed as 'Organist to the Corporation'. In making this appointment, the City Council had engaged a virtuoso performer and the person best able to exploit the potential of the new instrument. Best retained this position until he retired in 1894, and his recitals during those thirty-nine years made the hall a '...veritable Mecca not only of organ lovers, but of all those interested in music...' (Sumner 1955:24). S. S. Wesley had envisaged the organ as being '...used in a variety of ways...', but Best, in his weekly concerts, went beyond this, and performed '...the whole field of music, so far as it was representable on the organ...' (Statham 1909:220). These programmes formed '...one of the most remarkable – perhaps the most remarkable – series of programmes ever gone through by one player...his repertoire included everything worth playing that had ever been written for the organ, and everything in classical music that could be suitably arranged for it...' (Statham 1909:220&221). Best's reputation became world wide, and earned him the distinction of being described as '...the Paganini, the Liszt, and the Berlioz of the organ...' (Levien 1942 – Preface).

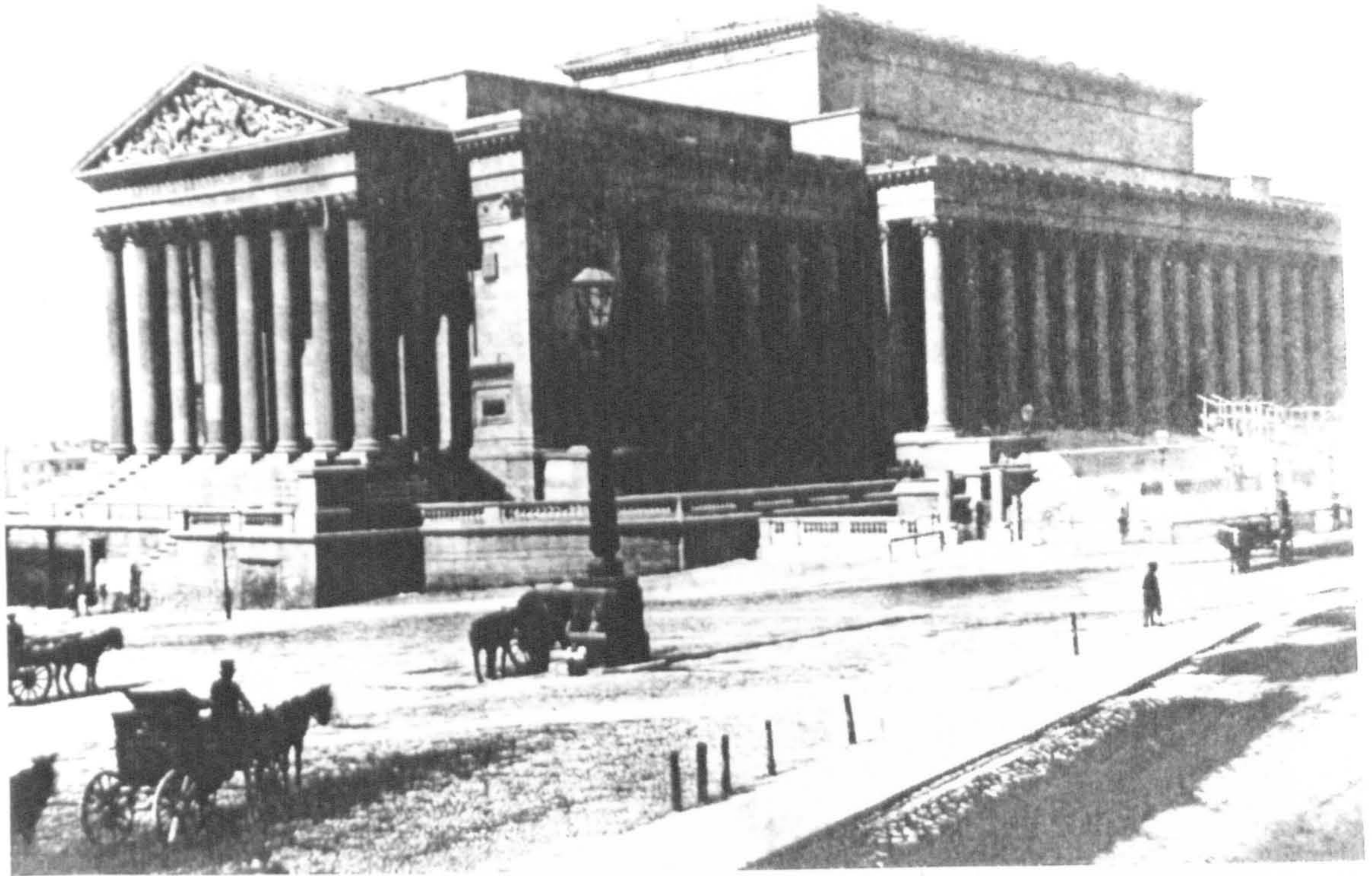
The 19th century and Victorian trends, developments and aspirations: the technological and human legacy of the 'Industrial Revolution'; the civic pride of the newly expanded industrial conurbations; the drive towards the amelioration of the condition of the poorer classes, and the idea of the use of music as an aid to this social improvement; the application of technology to the development and 'improvement' of musical instruments, in order to make them capable of the new demands, on the part of composers and performers, for flexibility, colour, variety and 'expression'; the development of instrumental virtuosity to an unprecedented degree; and the very Victorian desire of the individual to succeed on his own merits alone – all intersect in W. T. Best's appointment to St. George's Hall.

Before discussing Best's subsequent achievements as a musician, and his contribution to Victorian England, and the musical life of the 19th century, a consideration of the man as a personality and an 'eminent Victorian' would be appropriate.

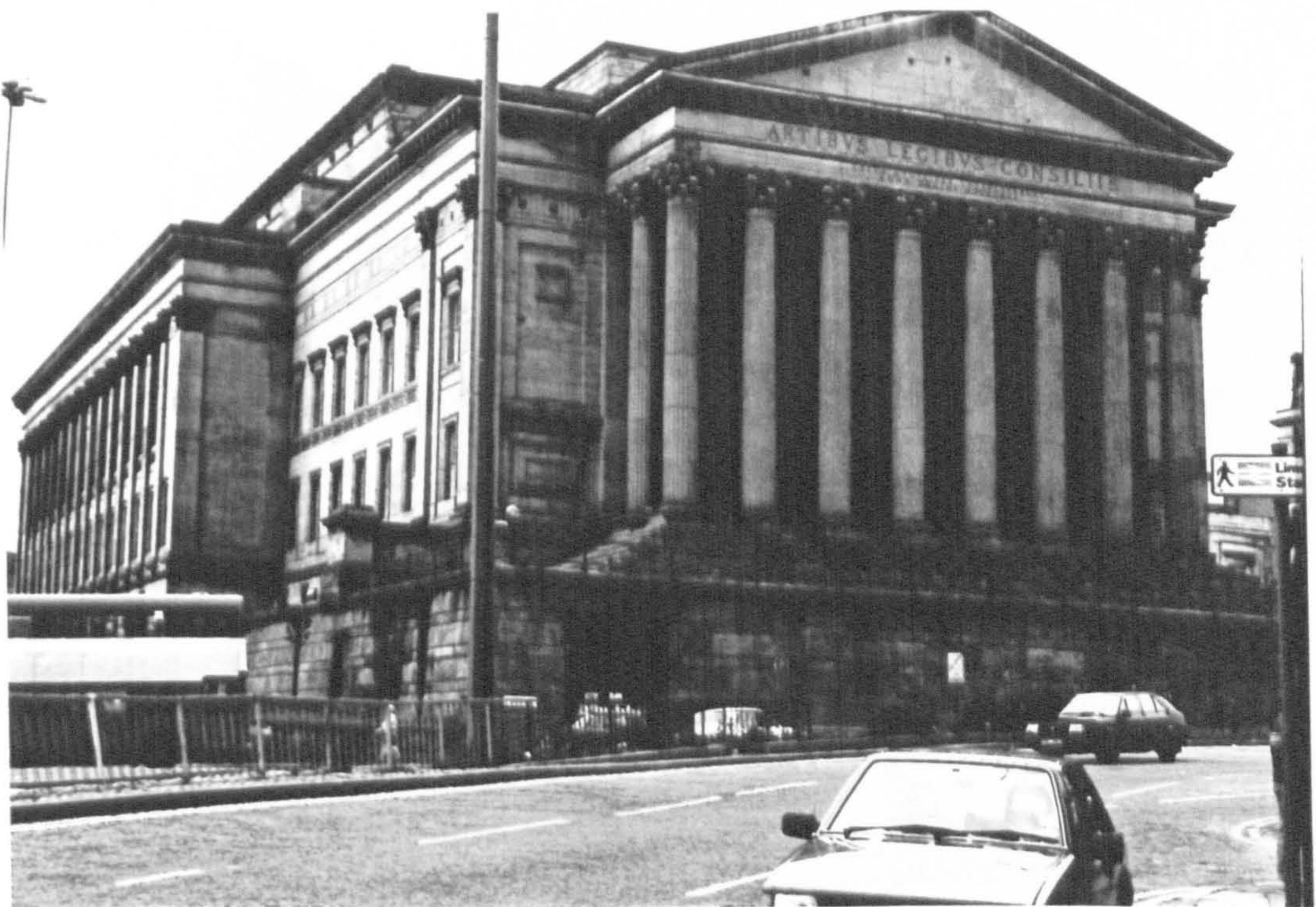
[original in colour]



95. The Organ in St. George's Hall as it is today.



96. *St. George's Hall in the 19th century.*



97. *St. George's Hall in the 20th century. [Photograph R. D. Tebbet]*



98. *St. George's Hall as it is today. [Photographs R. D. Tebbet]*

CHAPTER 10

W. T. BEST - THE MAN

".....neatness and efficiency in all things....."

[original in colour]



99. W. T. Best as a young man, probably c1855.

When W. T. Best took up his position as Organist at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, he was a married man with two young children. Two further children, William Henry and Florence Louisa, were born during the 1850's, but only Clara Eliza and William Henry survived childhood. Little is known about the Best household, apart from the fact that he employed two domestic servants.¹ It is possible, however, to build up a picture of W. T. Best himself.

In his younger days Best was described as a '...remarkably handsome man...' (Statham 1909:243), whilst in his later years he was likened to the then Prince of Wales (Watson 1921:234), also having a '...good height...' (MO March 1937:537). His physical characteristics would appear to have been ideally suited to playing the organ. Levien referred to him as being '...well formed in the hinder parts...' (1942:25), with a '...Cumberland back with broad hips...' which allowed him to '...seat the organ stool firmly...' (1937:537), and both hands and feet were of an ideal shape. *Musical Opinion* (March 1937:537) carried this description of his feet:

.....an instep highly arched, the feet straight and not splayed in the manner approved by old-time sargeant instructors. Walking was something of a task to him, owing perhaps to the narrowness and set of his feet.....

His hands were described as '...beautifully shaped...' (Statham 1909:243) and '...singularly beautiful...' (Watson 1922:328):

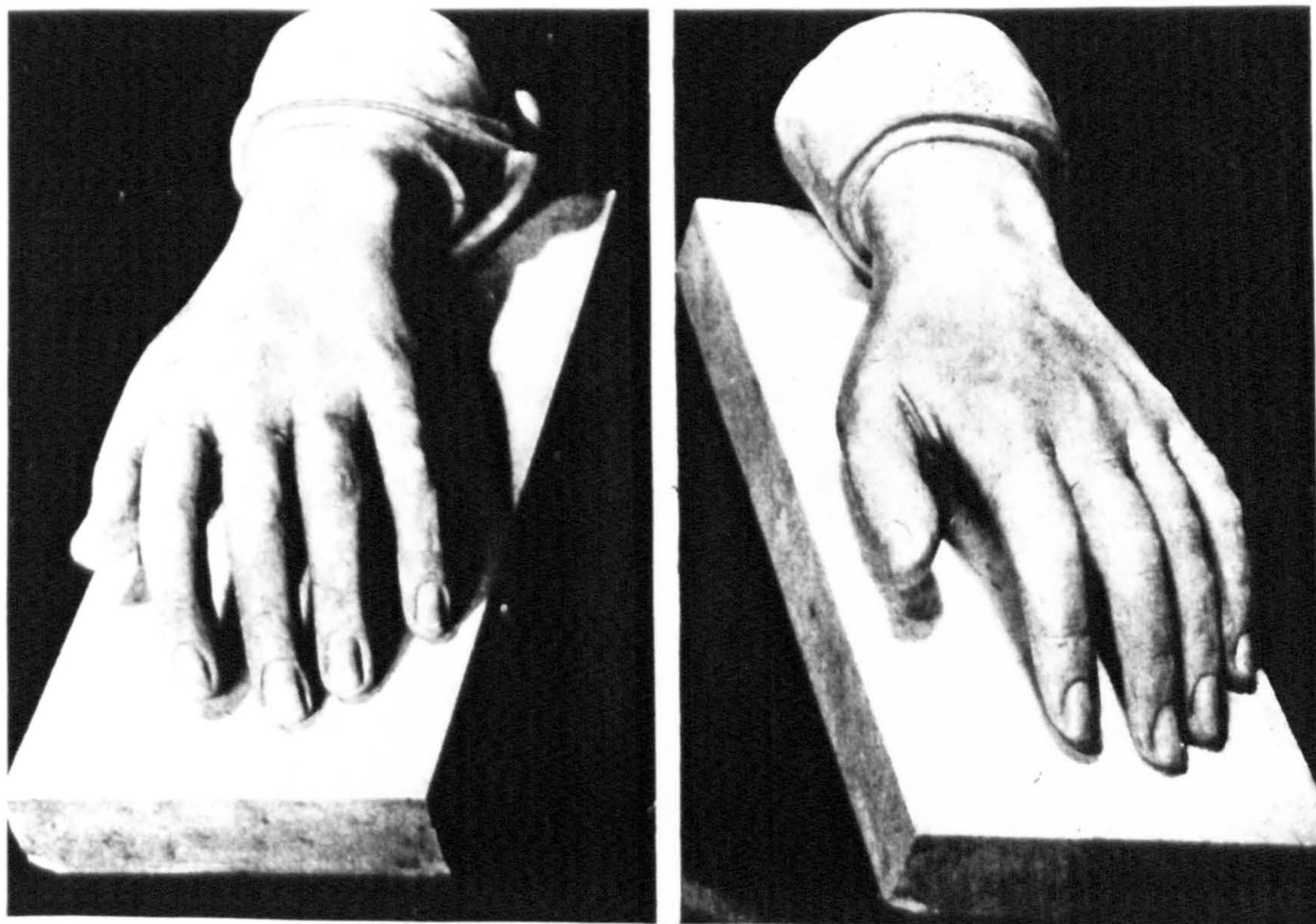
.....They were rather thick at the knuckles, and with long taper fingers, which were kept quite straight in playing rapid passages, striking the keys with the precision of mechanical levers..... (Statham 1909:243)

A cast of Best's right hand was taken, although there seems to be some uncertainty as to when this was done. Statham (1909:243) thought that a sculptor in Italy had asked for the cast, whereas *Musical Opinion* (March 1937:537) believed that a model had been made by a sculptor. Watson (1922:328) maintains that the cast taken immediately after death, and it is possible that these three accounts are not mutually exclusive and refer to the same event. Best was vain about his hands. Levien (1942:37) described how he [Best] would take a silk handkerchief out of his bag and wipe the keys of an organ before starting to practice, and Dr. R. C. Brown (1922:122) related the following anecdote:

.....Shortly after we had commenced dinner Mr. Best threw away his table napkin and said sharply to the waitress "Take that napkin away - it is damp!" When I asked him what was the matter, he said that he was afraid of getting rheumatism in his fingers.....

Best would appear to have been the possessor of a deep voice with a distinctive nasal timbre and north-country accent (Levien 1926/1942:33&40). The *Liverpool Review* (24th February 1894:3) spoke of his '...rugged, bluff, yet "dry" style of diction...' which it found '...refreshingly quaint...', but when he had anything particularly cutting to say '...he affected a peculiar nasal drawl...' (Watson 1921:234).

That Best dressed in an elegant manner can be observed from the few photographs of him which survive, a view which is confirmed by various writers who knew him. Fagge (1940:5) speaks of his '...well-groomed style of dress...', Levien (1939:198) adding that his taste was excellent. That Best had '...an eye for colour...' (MO 1937:729) is confirmed by Levien (1942:37) who noted how '...a nice grey frock-coat and a blue-grey tie suited the colour of his eyes and his greying hair...'.



100. *The Hand of W. T. Best*

From a photograph of a cast by an Italian sculptor in the possession of Mrs.

Bozoli, widow of Peter Best Bozoli, the grandson of W. T. Best.

[Photograph by Mr. Marsh, published in 'The Organ' Vol.xxiv, No.93, July 1944]

Best's neatness of dress was just one example of a characteristic which was found in all areas of his life and work. Neatness and efficiency were the hallmarks of his approach to all things. His study was kept in an orderly state with nothing ever out of place (Levien 20/9/1939:3&4). He kept an album into which he pasted every one of his recital programmes, and he had another in which were entered the names and address of every correspondent (Statham 1909:242&244). Friends and relations can provide eye-witness accounts of Best's neatness. William Lowes Rushton wrote:

.....When Best got his letters he would place them on the table in a downward row, one just covering the edge of the next one above it: each letter would be opened with a cutter and the envelope thrown in the waste paper basket before it was read: when read it would be neatly laid on one side, or put away, before the next was dealt with..... (Levien 20/9/1939:3&4)

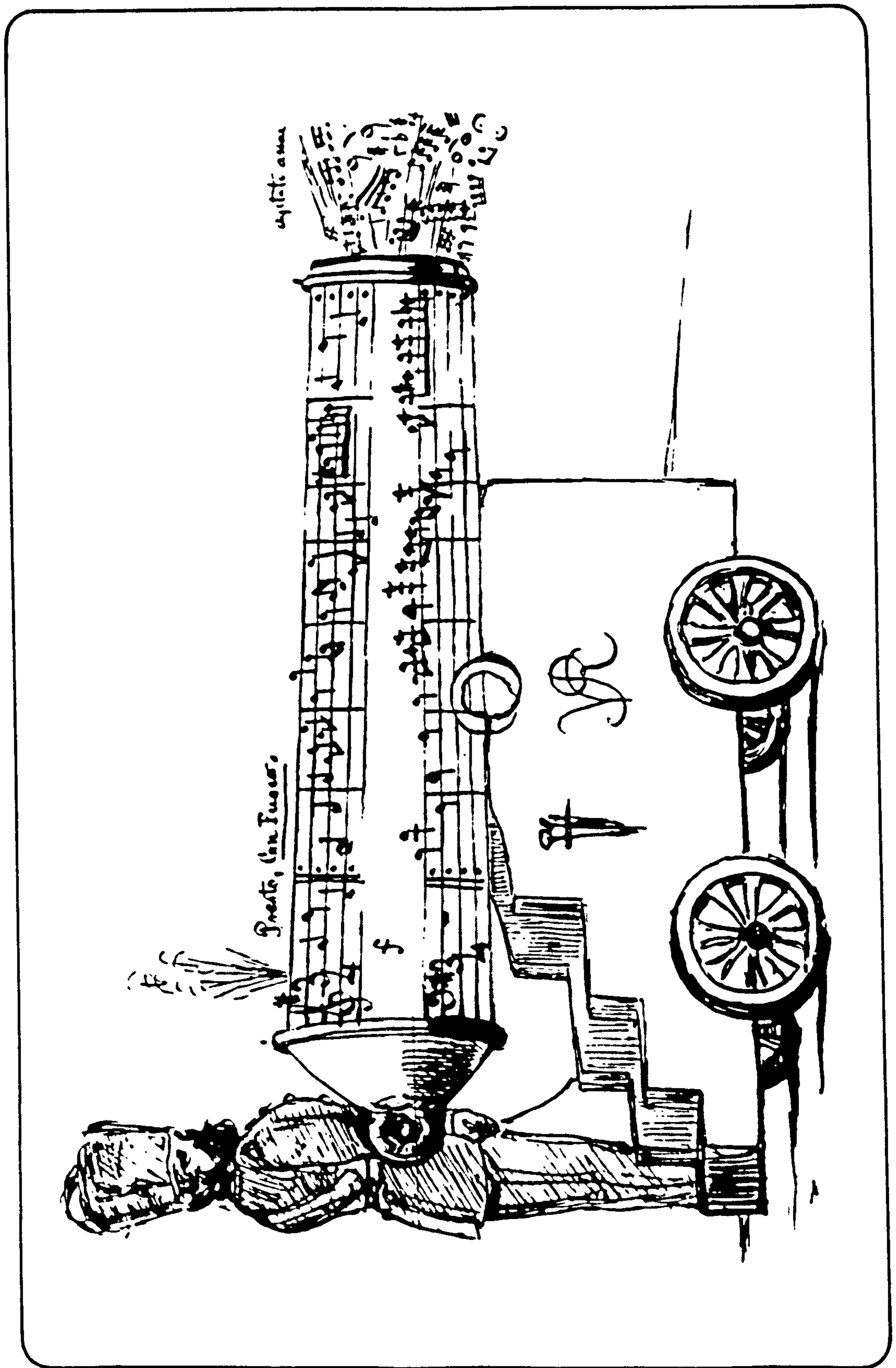
Mrs. Best related that:

.....When he went to bed he always took his watch off the chain, put it on the table with the ring at the top, arranged the chain in an S form below it, placed his signet-ring below the chain, and his pince-nez below the ring, with the silk cord arranged in an S form - a rather flat S - below it..... (Levien 20/9/1939:3&4)

Best's feeling for neatness extended to the layout of the dinner-table, as J. M. Levien found out:

.....I rarely take salt, but one day at luncheon he [Best] told me I was to take some with a certain dish - helped myself from a cruet which stood at the corner of the table between him and me - Having turned it round myself I only perfunctorily replaced it: he at once requested me to put it at the correct angle in relation to the corner of the table..... (Levien 20/9/1939:3)²

Best approached all aspects of his life in the same spirit. He never lost his interest in engineering and architecture, and was knowledgeable in the realms of literature and art, in addition to being a keen student of public affairs.³ This attitude to life was reflected in his musical achievements, in which he gained a reputation that was worldwide. His serious approach was coupled with a capacity



101. Sketch by W. T. Best, 1863 [Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES]

for hard work and great attention to detail. These qualities were combined with a rugged individualism and self-reliance – as he wrote in a letter to Alfred Hollins (1936:168) – ‘...A man is what he makes himself to be; no less – no more...’.

Watson (1921:234) described Best as being ‘...without...geniality...except perhaps to his private circle of friends with whom he could be very charming...’. The latter would certainly appear to have been the case. The American organist, Everett E. Truette (a one-time pupil of Best) regarded him as ‘...cordial, warm hearted, enthusiastic and entertaining...’ and ‘J. J. M.’ wrote in the *Musical Standard* after his death ‘...I shall never forget his great kindnesses and I can truly say that to myself he was a guide, philosopher and true friend and no one regrets his passing more than I do...’ (MS 15th May 1897:310). This kindness was evident in the help that Best was prepared to give aspiring young musicians.⁴

Best was an excellent host⁵, and would appear to have been something of a ‘bon viveur’. Clarence Eddy, the American organist and composer, when invited to lunch by Best, wrote that as he was an ‘...unusually “fine taster” I enjoyed the best that Liverpool could afford...’ (1890:178). A writer in *Musical Opinion* (May 1937:729) regarded a dinner at Best’s table as a ‘memorable event’ because he was ‘...truly hospitable, with a fine palate for wine and the higher gastronomics, coupled with sparkling conversational powers...’. Best’s ‘fine palate’ was described in greater detail by Levien (1942:40):

.....[Best] had a “fine old English gentleman’s” liking for a good bottle of wine; and as in all else with which he was concerned, a feeling for the fitness and completeness of things prandial led to his keeping up his sherry with his soup, burgundy with his mutton, half-a-glass of stout with his cheese (an English north-country taste that was always an astonishment to his Florentine wife), and some occasional vintage port, longer than was advisable in his advancing years.....

Truette speaks of Best being ‘...in his best mood after a recital when he had his usual “brandy and soda” near at hand...’ (Mansfield 1918:224). According to Mrs. Best, whenever her husband was visited by the Liverpool solicitor and amateur organist, E. Townsend Driffield, he ‘...always had more to drink than was good for

him...' (Harrison n.d.:14&15). When William Faulkes (1863–1933) visited Best at St. George's Hall after the latter's return from Australia, he '...went to a cupboard and took out some cordial, giving a glass to his visitor. In his dry way he said, "Get outside that"...' (Harrison n.d.:17).

Best also had a liking for cigars. The *Musical Herald* (January 1890:293) describes the scene in the green room after a rehearsal of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society:

.....Sir Charles Hallé is telling Mr. Best of his proposed forty concerts with Lady Hallé to be given shortly in Australia, and as Mr. Best offers Sir Charles a cigar, we wonder whether they will next smoke the pipe of peace together in that far-off land.....

The smoking of a cigar marked the beginning of an outing which gives a rare glimpse of Best as a 'man-about-town'.

.....A few years ago I met Best quite casually one Saturday afternoon in London. He had nothing particular to do; neither had I. We met at Blanchard's in Regent Street; and after smoking a cigar together and varying the proceedings by a little indulgence in rum punch, we set out to go to Simpsons in the Strand to dine together, hailing a shoeblack on the way to get a shine which was very necessary on account of the dirty condition of the streets. After dinner, Best proposed that we should go to the theatre.....and.....we landed at the Adelphi, where there was a heart-rending and blood-curdling play called "Storm Beaten!"..... (Haddon:484)

In addition to being a good host and a genial companion, Best was also a master of wit. As with another north-country musician, Sir Thomas Beecham (1879–1961), there are many stories about his 'sayings'. These are often amusing, and reveal Best as a cynical observer of life with a '...sharp, withering tongue...' (Watson 1921:234).

Of the legal profession, Best once remarked – '...two men quarrel over eighteen pence, and then pay other men with bits of horsehair on their heads five hundred guineas to settle the matter for them...' (Levien 1942:Preface). Best was

literally surrounded by lawyers as St. George's Hall also contained the Law Courts. John H. Kenion relates how he once met Best at the Hall during the sitting of the assizes:

.....whist we were chatting together at the door of the Nisi Prius Court before the work of the day began, the plaintiff in an action against the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway for damages for injuries the man had sustained, and which stood first in the list for trial, was carried into court upon a litter. Turning to me he said most pathetically, "Sad, very sad isn't it, Kenion, but, my friend, wait until the verdict's given, and he will skip like a young Ram on Sion... (Kenion 1926)

At a meeting of the Incorporated Law Society in 1885, Best was engaged to provide music for the banquet held in St. George's Hall. He was to play the National Anthem for the toast to the Queen at the conclusion of the speech by the President. As the speech proved to be a long one, Best '...overwhelmed the speaker with his fullest organ, much to that gentleman's evident discomfiture, but to the relief of the assembled guests...' (Kenion 1926).

When a decorative sculpture, representing "Cotton", was added to one of the public buildings in Liverpool, Best remarked '...That would be all very well...if they made cotton; but they don't make it - they only chaffer in it...' (Statham 1909:239). The staple business of 'The Flags' in Liverpool was the buying and selling of cotton.

This wit was applied to all aspects of his life. He once described some medicine which the doctor had prescribed for his wife's bronchitis as '...like furniture polish...' (Levien 1942:40). However, Best saved his most biting sarcasm for pretentiousness, artistic incompetence and anything which lowered the dignity of his art as a musician and an organist.

As 'Feste' (Harvey Grace) wrote, Best '...rightly refused to submit to treatment that would never have been offered a virtuoso pianist or violinist...' (MT November 1942:340). Best was a virtuoso player, and was very conscious of the fact that he owed his pre-eminence in the musical profession to hard work and not

just to publicity. He once remarked that he '...had not been nourished on a newspaper diet...' (MO March 1937:538). Best resented the position he had to adopt as a performer on the organ because of the usual siting of the console - '...Every small singer is allowed to come down to the front of the platform and get *en rapport* with the audience, but there am I, far away, stuck behind a sort of tombstone, perhaps with the back of my head to the audience...' ('H[arvey] G[race]' 1926:691)

Any treatment which Best considered to diminish his status as a musician and organist was dealt with by the full force of his invective. Best was accompanying a rehearsal which was being conducted by Alberto Randegger (1832-1911). At one point the conductor stopped, and suggested that Best's organ prelude was rather loud. Best's response was short and to the point - '...Mr. Randegger, will you please go back to your stick and leave me to my organ...' (Bowden 1926). When the organ by Schulze in St. Bartholomew's Church, Armley, Leeds, was not completely finished when Best arrived to give the opening recital, he refused to play, and felt obliged to defend his action in the local Press.⁶ It is unlikely that Liszt or Thalberg would have been expected to perform on an unfinished instrument, and there are several instances of Best refusing to perform in circumstances which he considered '...derogatory to his station and unworthy not only of himself personally but of the organ...' (Haddon:484).⁷

Best had a quick temper, especially when his professional competence or integrity were questioned. In 1867, a remark made by the tenor, Wilbye Cooper, after a performance of Handel's *Messiah* in which both had taken part, which Best regarded as an insult to his professional abilities, resulted in physical violence. The result was a court case *Cooper v Best*, which was heard at the Court of the Exchequer early in 1868.⁸ Although he was a musician of international standing, Best spent the greater part of his professional life as an employee of Liverpool Corporation. As might be expected from a man of his temperament, Best had several skirmishes with those in authority over him, including an 'incident' which occurred on the occasion of the visit of Prince Alfred to Liverpool on 23rd July 1866.⁹ As Best, in the guise of the magazine correspondent 'W. B.', ruefully remarked that the organist in such cases '...must pocket (with his salary) such



102. W. T. Best in middle age [Liverpool City Library]

affronts as officials pass upon him...' (MS Vol.v, No.112, 22nd September 1866:180). Although better known as a concert organist, Best also held appointments as a church organist throughout his life and would seem not to have fared any better in some of his dealings with his ecclesiastical superiors. His manner of leaving his position of organist at Holy Trinity, Walton Breck, Liverpool, would appear to bear this out.¹⁰

Best was intolerant of musicians, whether professional or amateur, who did not adopt a 'professional' approach to their art.¹¹ As a person of strongly held views and opinions, it comes as no surprise that Best crossed swords with some eminent members of the musical profession. Early in his career he had dedicated his Fantasia Op.1 to 'S. S. Wesley Esqre. Mus.Doc.', and his Prelude and Fugue in E minor Op.2, No.3 to 'E. J. Hopkins Esqre.', but in later years he was less polite to these two musicians. Mention has already been made of Best's opinion of Wesley's ideas on tuning and organ design. Best referred Dr. E. J Hopkins as '...old Neddy of the Temple Church...' (Mansfield 1918:229) or '...Lambeth Neddy...' (Letter to A. J. Hipkins, 6th October 1882 BL Add. MS 41636, f.330¹²). In a letter to H. C. Tonkin, Best described Hopkins as a 'trimmer', which he defined as '...a man who eats his own expressed opinion if he can curry favour with others...' (Mansfield 1918:229). When Hopkins wrote to the *Musical Standard* praising as Best described it '...organists who grubbed on the lowest octave of the pedals...' and describing the excessive use of the upper notes as '...twittering on the top F...' (Mansfield 1918:229&230), Best responded by having "All hail! E. J. H." printed over a top F on the pedals in his *Toccata in A*.

Sir Walter Paratt (1841-1924) was critical of Best's transcriptions for the organ. Best's reply, dated May 1892, began as follows:

.....Mr. Walter Parratt, Organist to the Queen, maintains a singularly hostile attitude to all "arranged" music for the organ, singling out for special animadversion my contributions to this class of music, termed by him "examples of misapplied skill"; and in lectures delivered in his native town - Huddersfield - he reiterates similar opinions..... (Reprinted in *The Organ*, Vol.1, No.1, July 1921:58-61)

103. W. T. Best - Toccata in A.

After a well-argued defence of the practice, Best concludes by hoping that Parratt will compose for the organ '...as befits his high office...'. Soon after this reply appeared in print, J. Bryson met Best whilst crossing the Liverpool Exchange flags:

....."Ah", he [Best] said, "did you see what that man Parratt has been saying about me? I had to give him a dressing down, the impudent cockatoo!..... (Bryson 1926:1212)

As a largely self-taught musician, and in view of his temperament, it is hardly surprising that Best had a contempt for degrees, diplomas and honours of any kind, whether academic, social or political. He had a dislike of the '...elaborately titled musical man...' and said that such a person '...suffered from too much alphabet...' (Mansfield 1918:229). In a letter to Alfred Hollins he speaks of '...insensate men who seek to fortify themselves with snippets from the unfortunate alphabet, before or after their cognomens...' (1936:168). When asked about taking a Doctorate, he would reply '...perhaps you'll be good enough to indicate who is going to examine me...' (Bowden 1926). Best had no wish to become a '...bird of gay plumage...' (Levien 1942:12).

In the *Musical Opinion* for the 1st June 1880 (Vol.3, No.33:19) it was announced:

.....W. T. BEST, the celebrated composer and adapter of organ music, and for many years the organist of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, has been granted a Civil List pension of £100 a year, in recognition of his services to music.....

This pension was accepted in preference to a knighthood (Mansfield 1918:223&224). When asked about his refusal of this honour Best replied '...Well, you see, if they call me 'Sir William', it will take more than the pension to keep up the style!...' (Watson 1921:234). Best had no such qualms about the Philharmonic Society of London. When he was informed of his election as an associate in November 1872, he replied to Stanley Lewis, the Secretary of the Society, that he was '...wafted into Paradise at last...' (B.L. Loan 48/13/4, ff 27&28).¹³



104. W. T. Best in later life.

The various qualities that went to make up W. T. Best's character – self-help, hard work, individualism, and integrity made him a formidable 'Victorian'. The *Liverpool Review* (24th February 1894:3) summed him up in the following words:

.....Mr. Best has long been known among his immediates as "a character". Scholarly, extremely well read, a keen and critical - not to say cynical - observer of men, he is, and has always been, one of the most unassuming of men. Anything savouring of toadyism and egotism he hates with an intense hatred. Probably he himself would use harsher and stronger words than this; humbug, cant and hypocrisy are not unknown in his vocabulary.....

To this must be added the fact that, on occasions he could show great kindness. His amusing turn of phrase, and his capacity for living made him into the "character" mentioned above.

As well as being an 'eminent Victorian', Best and his achievements had a musical significance that was world-wide. In the 19th century Liszt completely revolutionised the approach to the piano through his playing, transcribing and composing, at a time when the instrument itself was at a state of development which made such an approach possible. Best's achievements on the newly developed 19th century concert-organ as player and transcriber, if not as composer, are worthy of comparison with those of Liszt.

W. T. Best's Health

Best suffered from ill-health during the latter part of his life. The first references come round about 1882 (Livesey 1926:258, Mansfield 1918:224) when he is said to have visited Italy as part of his convalescence. In 1890, when a serious breakdown in health again threatened, Best accepted the invitation to open the new organ in Sydney Town Hall, Australia, hoping to benefit from the sea voyage (Livesey 1926:258), but this did not have the desired effect. In 1894 he retired

from all his positions on the grounds of ill-health.

The causes of death, as recorded on his death certificate¹⁴, can provide some possible clues as to the reasons of Best's poor health in later life. The causes were:

Morbus Cordis

Dropsy 3 years

Congestion of lungs 3 days

'Morbus cordis' (heart failure) and the 'congestion of lungs' indicate that he possibly died of 'congestive heart failure'. It is likely that he suffered from 'ischaemic heart disease', symptoms of which could be angina and 'Dropsy'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) describes Dropsy as a morbid condition with accumulation of watery fluid in the serous cavities and connective tissues of the body. This could result in swollen ankles – a condition from which Best certainly suffered. He refers to '...the most annoying and painful 'swelling of my ankles'...' in a letter to J. M. Levien, dated 23rd August 1895. Writers have stated that Best suffered from 'heart attacks' (Harrison n.d.:16,17&21). It is likely that what 19th century doctors called 'heart attacks' are not what would be described as such today, but may well have been angina attacks, symptoms of his heart disease. Mention is made of Best's slow pulse-rate (MT 1st August 1926:691, MO March 1937:537) which may have been either a symptom or a result of his condition.

Best himself, and other writers (Harrison n.d.:16&17, Mansfield 1918:227), attributed this swelling of the ankles to gout. As he wrote '...the most annoying and painful 'swelling of the ankles', which form the Gout now leaves me in...' (Letter to J. M. Levien, 23rd August 1895). Gout is not the result of an excess of port, although Best's lifestyle might suggest this (Levien 1942:40), but is a swelling of the joints caused by the forming of crystals of uric acid. Best may not have suffered from gout (although he himself believed he did) but he did suffer from dropsy – the swelling of ankles being a common symptom – and, of course, it is possible that he suffered from both.

Some of the medical treatments of Best's time seem very primitive today:

.....Dropsy set in. Three times the doctors tapped him to relieve his heart.....they came on the third and last occasion to find the old man working away on MSS which were on a table by his bedside. He never rallied..... (Harrison n.d.:23)

.....Mrs Best told me how he had to apply leeches to keep down the swelling of his ankles..... (Levien 1942:52)

It is likely, therefore, that Best was a sufferer from ischaemic heart disease during the last fifteen or so years of his life. This would account for the various symptoms described by different writers. It is also possible that he suffered from gout. His liking for good food and wine, implied by such descriptions as '...an unusually "fine taster"...' (Eddy 1890:178) would not have helped his heart condition, and possibly contributed to its cause.

There is also the possibility that there was a strain of insanity running through the Best family, although this is by no means conclusive. Best's father committed suicide, the death certificate also adding 'insanity'. At the Coroner's Inquest it was revealed that he had been in '...very low spirits...', so it may well have been the case that William Best (senior) had been suffering from what we would now call acute depression, not insanity.¹⁵ Best's son, William Henry Best, died in the Lunatic Asylum at Lancaster, and for a time may have been a private patient of Dr. Joseph Rogers at Rainhill Asylum.¹⁶ No details of the condition of Best's son have emerged, and the fact of committal to a lunatic asylum does not imply that he would be considered insane by today's standards.

Sir Charles Santley (1834-1922) attributed the mental condition of William Henry Best to his mother's side of the family¹⁷, but it could be just as easily argued that it was paternal in origin. W. T. Best himself had a fiery personality, and on occasions his behaviour went beyond what could be excused by 'artistic temperament', as in the case of *Cooper v Best*. It is, therefore, likely that there was a strain of instability (it is not possible to put it stronger than that) running through three generations of the Best family, and that W. T. Best's behaviour, on occasions, bears this out.

PART 4

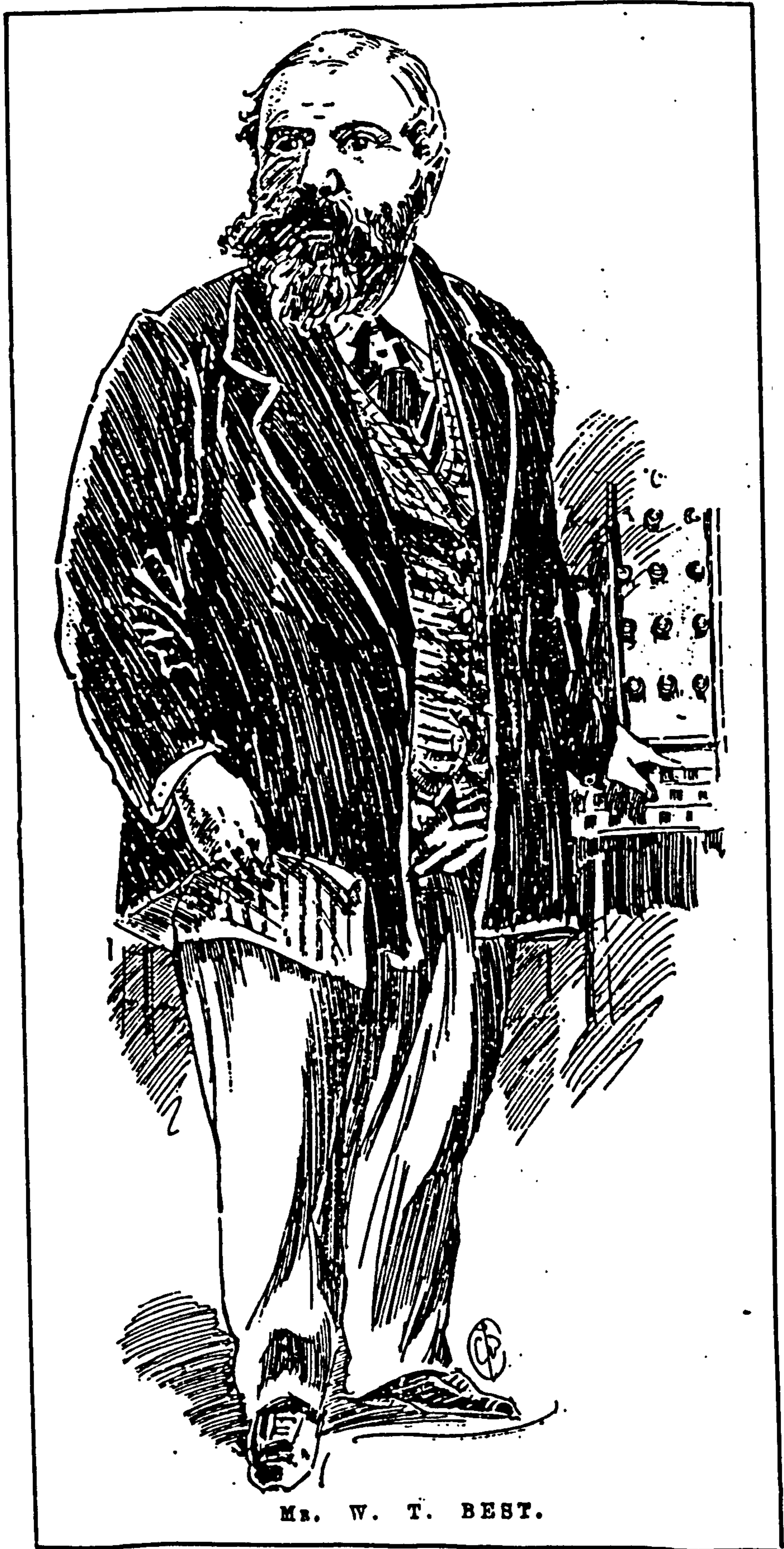
A GREAT ARTIST AND A REMARKABLE MAN

CHAPTER 11

THE CIVIC MUSICIAN

*.....a Corporation organist has to present an unending series [of programmes],
all the year round for years.....*

(W. T. Best)



105. Drawing of W. T. Best [Liverpool Review, 24th February 1894]

W. T. Best took up his appointment as Organist at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, in August 1855, at a salary of £300 per annum. He was to give two recitals each week (later increased to three) for approximately thirty weeks of the year, there being no recitals when the Law Courts were in session. His first public recital took place on the 20th October 1855 (MW, Vol.xxxiv, No.36, 6th September 1856:570), but he played for the mayor and civic notables a week earlier (Roberts 1932:131), the *Liverpool Mercury* reported on the '...varied and extraordinary powers of the splendid instrument...' and '...the surprising talent of our accomplished townsman, Mr. Best...'¹

However, before this recital, Best directed a 'Grand Concert' on the 10th October on the occasion of the visit of H. R. H. the Duke of Cambridge to Liverpool. The *Musical Times* of 1st November 1855 (Vol.vii:140) implies that Best was responsible for the organisation of the entire concert. The vocalists were Madame Clara Novello, Miss Dolby, Herr Reichardt and Mr. W. H. Weiss, with a chorus selected from members of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. Best displayed his '...great and varied talents...' (MT, Vol.vii, 1st November 1855:140) in the triple rôle of solo organist, accompanist and conductor. Solos of organ music by Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn '...afforded Mr. Best an admirable opportunity for displaying every qualification of the organ, which, in his hands at least, seems one of the grandest and most superb instruments we have heard...' (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.42, 13th October 1855:665).

Although the early Town Hall organs had originally been conceived as having a purely accompanimental rôle in the great choral festivals, it was soon realised that the instrument could be an attraction in its own right. Hill's organ in Birmingham Town Hall, described by Gauntlett in the *Morning Post* of 25th September 1843 as a '...large, lumbering vocal accompaniment...' was soon being used by the Town Hall Organist, James Stimpson, for the weekly performance of popular music to audiences numbering over a thousand (Thistlethwaite 1984:16). Music itself was seen to have a moral purpose, having the ability to '...wean people from vicious indulgences...' and, if properly directed, to '...incline the heart to kindly feelings, and just and generous emotions...' (Hickson 1837:307). John

PRINCIPAL VOCALISTS.

Madame CLARA NOVELLO,

Miss DOLBY,

Herr REICHARDT,

Mr. WEISS.

CHORUS OF ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY PERFORMERS,

SELECTED FROM

THE MEMBERS OF THE LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

ORGANIST AND CONDUCTOR.

Mr. W. T. BEST.

106. Concert in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, 10th October 1855
[Liverpool City Library]

Curwen saw music as a means of preserving many people from '...the dangers of the theatre, the snares of the dancing saloons, and the dissipation of the drinking shops...' (*Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, May 1857).

As early as 1837, the Rev. Sydney Smith, in a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, had urged the new Queen [Victoria] to '...bend her mind to the very serious consideration of educating the people...', as this presented '...the best chance for national improvement...' (1837:11&12). 'Education' was seen as an aid to 'social improvement', particularly for the poorer classes, which were concentrated in the new manufacturing centres created as a result of the 'Industrial Revolution'. The following decades saw a movement towards the teaching of music by such pioneers as William Hickson, John Hullah and John Curwen. The organs in the great civic halls were seen as having a part to play in this educational process - '...In itself, it [music] is neither good nor bad, but by association, it may be made to subserve the cause of truth, it may be made to awaken the imagination...to advance the cause of virtue and morality, and in this way, we hope that the Organ will become a powerful agent in helping to rescue members of the debased and vile from their habits of wretchedness and immorality...' (MW, Vol.xxxi, 1853:691). W. T. Best's task, as a virtuoso performer on the largest and most technologically advanced organ in the world, was not only to perform music, but by 'educating', to help 'improve' the condition of the poorer classes.

On October 17th 1855, the Law Courts Committee set the admission price for Best's recitals at 6d. (Minutes 1849-1856, 352 MIN/LAW 1/2:436). The *Musical World* of 27th October (Vol.xxxiii, No.44:694) added that many of the members of the Committee had thought that admission should be free, but because '...of the injury inflicted on the building during the 'Alma' holiday, when the public were admitted gratuitously...' it had been decided that some charge ought to be levied. To begin with, the concerts took place on Saturdays and Mondays, but in April 1856, the Committee resolved that:

.....in future Mr. W. T. Best shall give three public performances weekly on the grand organ of St. George's Hall - two as at present - in the afternoon of Saturday and the evening of Monday, at a 6d. rate of admission, and another on Thursday night, when the price of admission will be reduced to 3d..... (MW, Vol.xxxiv, No.17, 26th April 1856:268)

According to a correspondent from the *Musical World*, who attended one of Best's recitals in 1856, that although the charge for admission was 6d., '...the audience (numbering from 1,500 to 2,000) were of all grades except the lowest.....' (MW, Vol.xxxiv, No.12, 22nd March 1856:183). An experiment with free admission to some Sunday afternoon concerts of 'sacred music' was unsuccessful because '...the free admission brought rough untamable youths, and the number of stewards to keep order [was] required to be large...' (MH, January 1890:291). These concerts were discontinued, much to the disappointment of *Musical Opinion*.² For some years there was a Thursday afternoon recital for the convenience of American visitors, or those passing through the city *en route* for the vessels sailing on Saturdays (Watson 1921:234)

Best was fully aware that if he was to attract and maintain an audience his choice of programmes was of supreme importance. As he put it in the *Musical Opinion* of 1st May 1892 (Vol.xv, No.176:355):

.....It must be remembered, however, that in endeavouring to raise the musical taste of the humbler classes the municipal authorities of our large towns did not intend their concert organs to be restricted to the performance of preludes, fugues and somewhat dry sonatas. As is the case with orchestral concerts of a popular character, the higher forms of composition have to be introduced both warily and gradually.....

Thistlethwaite (1977:77&78) has likened Best's programmes to those of Jullien's orchestral Promenade Concerts of the 1840's and 1850's.³ Best combined legitimate organ music with arrangements from the orchestral, chamber and choral repertoire. He also made fantasias from operas, under the title of 'Reminiscences', which consisted of a selection of arias and choruses linked together by short improvised phrases. The *Reminiscences of Les Huguenots* [Meyerbeer] contained the following movements:

Chorus: *Bonheur de la table*
 Chorale
 Huguenot's Song: *Piff! Paff! pour les couvents c'est fini*
 Chorus: *Abjurez, Huguenots*

In addition, Best arranged a number of 'Concert Fantasias' based on well-known

melodies, among them the *Fantasia on Scotch Airs*, the *Fantasia on English National Melodies* and the *Christmas Fantasia on Ancient English Carols*. He would also arrange music with a topical interest, such as the *Military Fantasia* to commemorate the Battle of Inkermann in 1854, and the fantasia of *Danish and English National Airs* to celebrate the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra (whose father later became King Christian IX of Denmark) in 1863. In doing this, Best showed that Liverpool could compare favourably with London, as a *Suite of Danish National Airs*, arranged for orchestra by August Manns, was performed at the Crystal Palace concerts at this time (MS, Vol.i, No.16, 16th March 1863:224&225).

Statham (1909:219&220) implies that Best soon dropped these concessions to popular taste from his programmes.⁴ There is no reason to suppose that he regarded this as an inferior branch of his art. Liszt had made similar fantasias for the piano, such as *Reminiscences de 'La Juive'* (1835) [Halévy] and *Grande Fantasia sur des thèmes de l'opéra 'Les Huguenots'* (1836) [Meyerbeer]. It is a genre that has attracted composers and arrangers since Best's time, and more recent examples include Sir Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, Leopold Stokowski's *Symphonic Synthesis of 'Boris Godunov'* [Mussorgsky], Ronald Stevenson's *Fantasia on themes from 'Peter Grimes'* [Britten] and Peter Maxwell Davies's *Suite from 'The Boyfriend'* [Wilson]. Contrary to Statham's assertion, Best was still playing his selections from operatic scores in the late 1880's.⁵

During his first season at Liverpool (20th October 1855 - 7th August 1856), the *Musical World* (Vol.xxxiv, No.36, 6th September 1856:570&571) reported that Best had given 77 recitals, and performed a total of 211 different compositions.⁶ The article drew attention to the success of the concerts:

.....Although it was very much doubted at first whether the public would be permanently attracted to hear the organ alone, it must be confessed that the experiment has proved most successful and gratifying. The attendance at the first concert, last year, numbered about one thousand persons; - at the last, which took place on the 7th of last month, upwards of 1,300 persons were present. The organ concerts now appear to be established on a firm and permanent basis, and one of the secrets of their success lies in the raised character of music which Mr. Best contrives to present to successive audiences.....

Fantasia on Scotch Airs.

W. T. Best

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Fantasia on Scotch Airs" by W. T. Best. The score is written on multiple staves, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and ornaments. There are several annotations and markings throughout the piece, such as "Gt.", "Ch. Grace", "Edu", "Alto", "Cantabile", "Ecco", "simile", "Ecco", "1", "2", and "88". The lyrics "There are, there are?" and "Highland and my love was born" are written below the staves. The handwriting is in ink and appears to be a working draft or sketch.

107. MS sketch of W. T. Best's 'Fantasia on Scotch Airs'

[Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

The obvious success of these concerts was due to a combination of Best's masterly playing - as early as 1851 the *Musical World* (Vol.xxvi, No.37, 13th September 1851:586) had described him as '...one of the most accomplished organists in Europe...' - and his skill in programme building. He was praised by the *Musical World* (Vol.xxxiv, No.36, 6th September 1856:571) for '...the taste and skill he has displayed in catering for the various musical tastes and pleasures of "the masses"...'.

However Best's concessions to popular taste were insufficient for some commentators. A correspondent to one of the Liverpool newspapers, quoted in the *Musical World* (Vol.xxxiv, No.6, 9th February 1856:84), wished '...to encourage the attendance of the working-classes...' by lowering the admission price, the playing of more popular music and the introduction of choruses for the audience to sing.⁷ '...Heaven forbid that such an edifice should ever be put to such a use...' was the response of the magazine, adding '...We are for instructing and if possible delighting the masses, but not for vitiating their taste and making fools of them...'. This debate continued, and the *Musical World* of 1st November 1856 (Vol.xxxiv, No.44:692 &693) published two letters from several dozens which had been sent to Best, and which showed '...how difficult it is to suit the varying and various tastes of the public.....'. The second of these letters⁸ offered suggestions as to how it might be possible to increase the audiences at the Thursday evening concert '...ten-fold...'. This, the writer suggests, could be achieved by a programme arranged '...to please the million, and that can only be done by hearing at least two pieces out of the five with which they are acquainted...' - music which will '...catch the ear, thrill the senses, and chain the continued attention of a Thursday night's audience, which are composed principally of the industrious classes, clerks, and others, who require something to cheer and exhilarate...'. The *Musical World*, however, thought that the only improvement needed was the '...placing of cushions on the seats...', and hoped that '...Mr. Best will select his programmes with the taste and tact he has always displayed, and that the committee will be content to "let well alone"...'.

The achieving of a balance in programme-planning between 'popular' music which will attract large audiences and 'serious' music which has much more of a minority appeal is one that still faces performers and concert-promoters today. In spite of the comments quoted above, Best would appear to have achieved a successful balance. Certain concerts, such as those on Thursday evenings, were of a

ST. GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL.



PROGRAMME OF THE
ORGAN RECITAL

By Mr. W. T. BEST.

Organist to the Corporation,

SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14th, 1889.

A SELECTION OF POPULAR MUSIC.

TRIUMPHAL MARCH. . . (NAAMAN.) . . . Sir MICHAEL COSTA.

ANDANTINO from the FOURTH SYMPHONY SPOHR.
Cradle Song....Dance....Serenade.

CONCERT FANTASIA on OLD ENGLISH AIRS W. T. BEST.

AIR—"Cupa fatal mestizia" (Maria di Rohan.) DONIZETTI.

OVERTURE—"GUILLAUME TELL" ROSSINI.

It is requested that persons who wish to leave the Hall before the conclusion of the programme will avail themselves of the interval between the pieces.

ADMISSION ONE PENNY.

To commence at Eight o'clock. The Concert lasts One Hour.

109. Programme of one of Best's 'Popular' Recitals
[Liverpool City Library Hq 786-8 BES]

specifically popular appeal, with a cheaper admission price. Other recitals, such as that given to celebrate the centenary of Mozart's birth⁹, were aimed at a more discriminating audience. Bryson (1926:1212&1213) tells of a meeting he had with Best:

....."Now", he [Best] said, "come with me to the printers in Castle Street and look at the proofs of my programmes for the week". We looked at the programmes for Saturday afternoon (Admission 6d.). "There", he said, "you see that is half organ music, and half arrangements"; then at that for the evening (Admission 1d.), excellent but more popular. "That", he said, "is for the unwashed".....

As was to be expected, the 'popular' concerts were well attended, the hall being '...often crowded...' (Livesey 1894:499), but the more 'serious' recitals were not. The *Musical Times* (1st January 1885:17) regretted that '...Liverpool should show so little appreciation of such classical recitals...'

The series of recitals performed by Best at St. George's Hall between 1855 and his retirement in 1894, must be one of the most remarkable by an interpretative musician, covering as they did, '...everything worth playing that had ever been written for the organ, and everything in classical music that could be suitably arranged for it...in short, the whole field of music, so far as it was representable on the organ...' (Statham 1909:221&222).

Best arranged more music for the organ than any other musician, and there are, I feel, three reasons for this. The first could be described as the 'educational' purpose. As Organist to the Corporation of Liverpool, Best fulfilled a rôle that is now provided by frequent 'live' orchestral and chamber concerts, recordings and broadcasts. In the 19th century, orchestral concerts were a comparative rarity, and organ concerts provided a cheap and popular means for the dissemination of music. Statham (1909:134&135) records the '...great excitement aroused...' over Best's performance of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, adding that people who could not afford even the cheapest seats at a Philharmonic Society concert had the opportunity '...for sixpence...' of becoming acquainted with the music. Statham (1909:135&137) himself maintained that he had never heard Mozart's *Splendente te Deus* and Haydn's *Insanae et venae curae* except played in transcription by Best, and that he preferred

Best's organ performance of the Andante from Mozart's 4th String Quartet to the original. There must have been a great many people who became acquainted with pieces of music entirely through Best's performances of them.

The second reason for Best having arranged so much music for the organ has its origins in a problem that confronts players, to some extent, even today. As an instrument, the organ has a large repertoire, but only a small proportion of this is music of the highest quality. Bach is the only 'great' composer to have devoted a considerable part of his output to the instrument.¹⁰ The 'great' composers since Bach's day have tended to write isolated works for the organ – the contributions of Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Liszt can hardly be said in quantity to merit comparison with their contributions to other musical media. Best was aware of the problem and the remedy:

.....As regards the organ, it is beyond cavil that a well-known instrumental adagio or andante, suitably arranged, is infinitely preferable to the frequently dull specimens of modern organ duly vaunted as being 'original'..... (Best 1892)

In order for Best to maintain programmes of sufficient quality and variety, for three recitals every week, it was necessary for him to draw on a wide spectrum of music. At least one of the recitals was of a deliberately 'popular' nature. Best played organ music of a lighter character by composers such as Lefébure-Wély, but as the instrument does not generally inspire music of the lighter type, he arranged much music which would now be termed 'light classical' – overtures by Hérold, Rossini, Auber, Bellini and Donizetti etc.. Mention has already been made of his operatic *Reminiscences* and fantasias on national airs.

The third reason for the arrangements lies in Best the virtuoso player taking great delight in using all the resources of his skill to re-*create* music in an exhilarating manner. Whatever the original impetus for these arrangements, Best approached the task with very considerable skill and a proper regard for the intentions of the composer.

In addition to his own public recitals, Best often contributed organ solos to the various 'People's Concerts' and 'Grand Concerts' held at St. George's Hall.¹¹ At these, Best performed on equal terms with some of the greatest performers of the day, such as Clara Novello and Charles Hallé. It would appear, however, that if concert promoters wished to make use of the organ in St. George's Hall they had to employ Best to play it. This state of affairs was challenged in the *Liberal Review* (2nd February 1878:10) under the heading of *The Musical Monopoly*:

.....It certainly appears to us that the Town Council are not bound to bow to the dictation even of a brilliant organist. If it is true that Mr. Best will only be organist upon his own terms, and those terms are unfair to other members of the general public, the sooner the Town Council proclaim the appointment vacant and advertise for Mr. Best's successor the better.....

The onslaught was continued in the edition of 16th February 1878:11, the writer pointing out that the organ had been built at public expense and maintained out of the rates. Music, it considered, was '...a refining influence...' and therefore the organ should be used '...so as to confer the greatest benefit upon the greatest number...' and not given into the hands of one person '...who does with it what he pleases and absolutely refuses to allow any other professional...to use it...'. The article ended with the words '...Monopoly is opposed to the spirit of the age...'. The journal then quoted a letter from someone who had wished to engage various eminent players, including Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911), organist of La Trinité in Paris, to perform at a series of 'Popular Concerts'.¹² Levien (1942:20) writes that Guilmant stayed with Best and played the organ in St. George's Hall privately, but declined to give a public recital, as also did the Belgian organist Jaak Nikolaas Lemmens (1823-1881) and the Englishmen Henry Smart and Dr. E. J. Hopkins. It is possible that Guilmant visited Best in December 1881, as on the 15th and 17th of that month he gave recitals on the organ that William Hill had built for the Great George Street Congregational Chapel, Liverpool (MO, Vol.v, No.4, 2nd January 1882:137).¹³ Recitals were given by other organists at St. George's Hall during Best's extended leave of absence in 1890. These players were Mr. C. W. Perkins (Birmingham Town Hall), Mr. Hudson (Southport), Dr. Rogers (Bangor) and Messrs. Birstall, Grimshaw, Driffield and Dawson of Liverpool. As Best's absence was longer than expected, I. H. Stammers and William Faulkes were also retained (MT, 1st March 1890:167, 1st October 1890:604).

ST. GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL.

REYNOLDS'S PEOPLE'S CONCERT

SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 24TH, 1857.

Vocalists:

MISS BELLA STEWART,
London.

MISS ELIZA LONDON,
late of Theatre Royal.

MR. A. ST. ALBYN,
Of the English and Italian Opera, London,

AND MR. E. CUZNER,
Of Chester.

WITH A GRAND

CHORUS OF GLEE & MADRIGAL

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MISS LONDON.

Instrumentalists:

GRAND ORGAN

MR. W. T. BEST.

PIANO FORTE

MR. D. G. BROWNE.

Overture.

"Meritano".....WAGNER

SOLO, GRAND ORGAN, Mr. W. T. BEST.

Ronde.

"One gentle heart,"
MISS STEWART
One gentle heart which we believe,
With us do smile, with us do grieve,
While worldly state round us may fall
Whate'er a charm dearer than all.

Solo and Chorus.

"The Chough and Crow".....BY HENRY BISHOP.

MISS LONDON, MRS. STEEDMAN,
and MR. CUZNER.

Solo.

The chough and crow to roost are gone,
The owl sits on the tree.—
The hushed wail with feeble moan,
Like infant charity.
The wild fire dances o'er the fen,—
The red star sheds its ray;
Uprouse ye then, my merry men,
It is our opening day.

CHORUS.

Uprouse ye then, &c.

110. Programme of the 'Peoples Concert' on 24th January 1857.

[Liverpool City Library]

ST. GEORGE'S HALL,



GRAND CONCERT,

ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th, 1859,

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.

VOCALISTS—

MADAME CLARA NOVELLO,

MADAME WEISS,

MR. WILBYE COOPER,

AND

MR. WEISS.

INSTRUMENTALISTS:

GRAND PIANOFORTE, HERR CHARLES HALL,

GRAND ORGAN - - - MR. W. T. BEE,

CONDUCTOR - - - J. BAGOT ROBINSON.

RESERVED SEATS, FULL DRESS, 4s; BODY OF THE HALL, 2s; GALLERY, 1s.

For further particulars apply to

MESSRS. HINE & SON, 57, CHURCH STREET,

where the Music of all the Songs sung in this Concert may be obtained.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

LIVERPOOL
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

111. Programme of the 'Grand Concert' on 20th September 1859.

[Liverpool City Library]

In 1883, Best's salary was raised from £300 to £400 per annum (Mansfield 1918:216). In view of Best's national and international repute as a player, and his achievements as composer, editor and arranger, it is easy to overlook the fact that for the greater part of his professional life he remained an employee of Liverpool Corporation. He could be called upon to perform at times other than those of the regular weekly recitals,¹⁴ as the following minute from a meeting of the Law Courts Committee, held on the 12th October 1864, demonstrates:

.....Resolved that Mr. Best be requested to attend tomorrow at St. George's Hall in order that the Chancellor of the Exchequer may have an opportunity of hearing the organ.....
(Minutes 1864-1866 352 MIN/LAW 1/4:2)

This also meant that he could be called to account for his actions and behaviour, as happened on at least one occasion.¹⁵ Best was not a man to take kindly to authority, especially where his art was concerned. As the *Liverpool Review* (24th February 1894:3) put it:

.....It may be opined that he [Best] has had some smart, sharp tussles with many authorities, principally, of course, in musical matters, but it may be taken for granted that whatever standpoint he took up it was one dictated by long and brilliant experience, and one calculated for the best.....

Because of ill-health, Best resigned from his post at St. George's Hall on the 3rd of February 1894 (MS, 15th May 1897:310), and his last public appearance at the Hall was on September 10th 1894, on the occasion of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York. He was presented with an illuminated scroll by the Council, which contained the following words:

At a Meeting of the Council of the City of Liverpool Held on Wednesday the 7th day of March 1894

The Right Honourable William Benjamin Bowring Lord Mayor and a full Council resolved

That the Council receive with very real regret the resignation of Mr. William Thomas Best, Corporation Organist, who during the long period of 38 years has presided at the Organ of St. George's Hall, and that the eminent position he holds in his profession has caused his official connection with the Municipality to reflect honours upon the City, and he carries with him into his retirement the thanks of the Council for his valuable and highly appreciated services, and also their sincere hope that rest from professional work may result in Mr. Best's complete restoration to health.

W. B. Bowring
Lord Mayor

George J. Atkinson
Town Clerk

[original in colour]



112. The illuminated scroll presented to W. T. Best on his retirement.

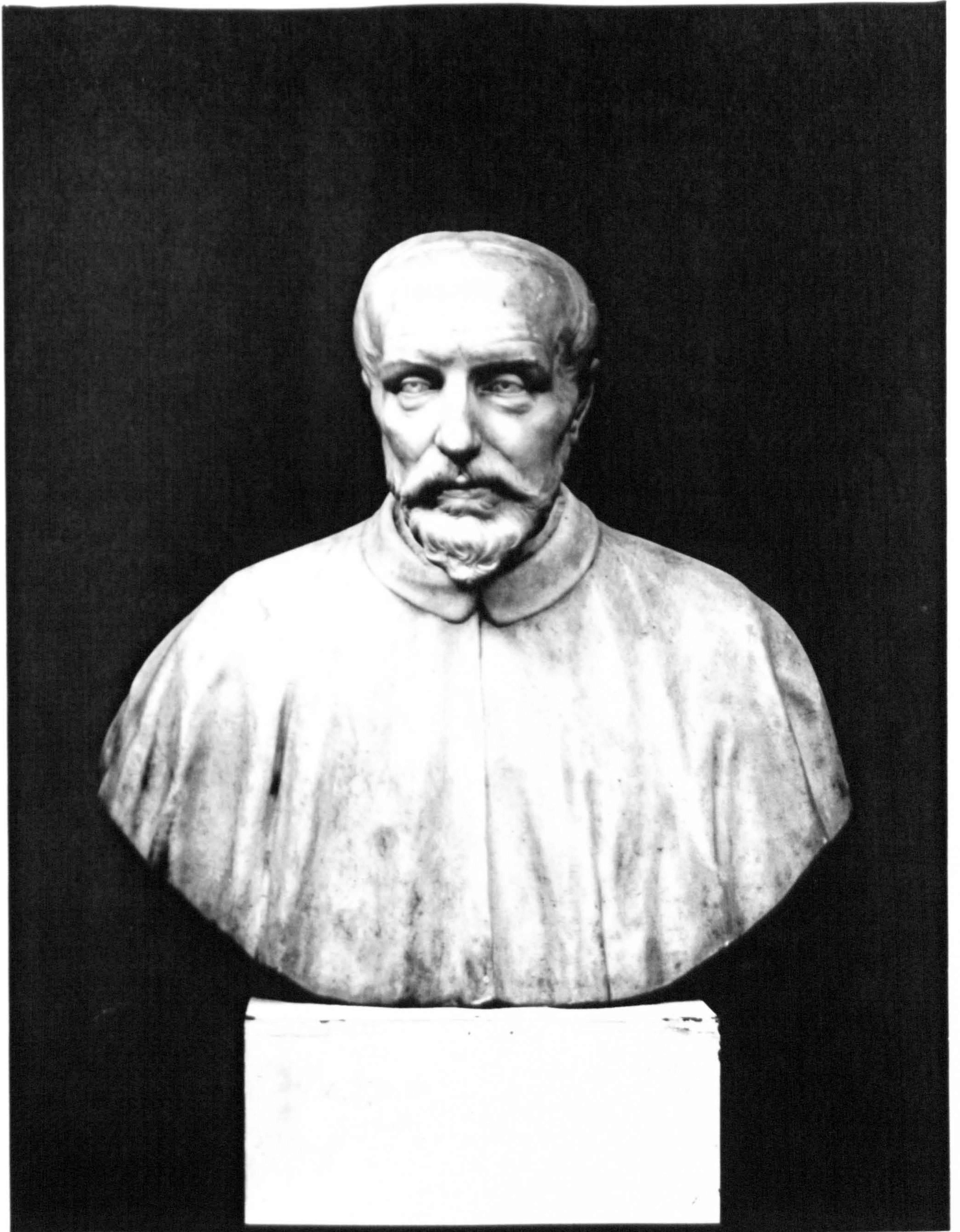
[Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES]

Best's resignation was received with '...universal regret...' (MT 1st March 1894:165&166), *Musical Opinion* (1st March 1894:348) adding that a '...more brilliant performer this country has probably never produced...'. The Corporation granted Best a pension, or retiring allowance of £240-5s.-0d. per annum.¹⁶ Musicians in Liverpool considered making a presentation to Best as a mark of esteem. On being asked what would be to his taste, Best replied '...a small dagger with a couple of nice diamonds in the handle...' (Harrison nd:18). A Committee, under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, invited subscriptions towards a permanent memorial to Best.¹⁷ This took the form of a bust, executed by the sculptor, Conrad Dressler. It was unveiled by the Earl of Derby on the 20th October 1896, '...in the presence of a considerable gathering of citizens and local aristocracy...' (Mansfield 1918:227).¹⁸ Best himself was unable to attend the ceremony because of ill-health (Carr 1951:14&15). The bust was placed in St. George's Hall, '...the Valhalla of Liverpool, among the statues of statesmen, scholars, and merchant princes associated with the great sea-port on the Mersey...' (Levien 1942:53). After the ceremony, the following tribute appeared in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of the 21st October 1896:

.....Mr. Best knew music, he knew the organ, he knew literature. He cultivated all these with a refinement which, savouring of precision, conferred a classical stamp on all his achievements: but his classicism was warmed by an energy never excelled by the wildest impulses of extempore genius.....The combination of force and fire and feeling with brilliant nicety and fastidious purity constituted the distinguishing glory of Mr. Best as an organist.....

Best's series of recitals as civic organist at Liverpool must rank as one of the musical landmarks of the 19th century. They combined variety with a breadth of repertoire which spanned 300 years,¹⁹ being presented by the greatest player of the age in a manner '...comparable only with Paganini on the violin...' (*Organist & Choirmaster*, Vol.ii, No.15, 15th July 1894:30). The *Liverpool Review* (24th February 1894:3) summed up Best's career as follows:

.....During his nearly forty years' triumphant mastership of the world-famous instrument at St. George's Hall, Mr. Best has delighted the hearts and stirred the souls of millions, and his retirement is a loss to Liverpool particularly and the musical world generally. The king of organists the world over - his going is indeed to be regretted. To once again requisition the hackneyed phrase, "Shall we ever look upon his like again".....



113. *The bust of W. T. Best by Conrad Dressler.*
[Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool]

CHAPTER 12

THE VIRTUOSO ORGANIST

".....If I would longer listen to.....a player like Mr. Best I would, were I not grown too old, jeopardise my pianistical career, begin to study the organ, where certainly I would be able to display much more eloquence as Beethoven and Chopin's speaker....."

Hans von Bülow
(*The Glasgow Herald*, 23rd November 1877:4)

'...An Indispensable Element of Music...'

The musical performer has the task of re-creating the ideas that the composer has tried to give some sort of permanent form by means of the notated musical score. He must present the musical truth of a composition as he sees it, and present this truth with conviction. The performer must also be able to convey this to the final element in the musical process - the listener. A necessary requisite for any great performer is the possession of a first-class technique, he must have complete control over his chosen musical medium. The name given to performers who possess such a technique is that of 'virtuoso'.

It could be argued that the entire modern concept of instrumental virtuosity is based on the example set by Niccolò Paganini (1784-1840) and Franz Liszt (1811-1886). However, prior to the 19th century many of the great composers were instrumental players: Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven were all virtuosi on their respective instruments. Frescobaldi (1583-1644) was able to execute the *tour de force* of playing the harpsichord with upturned hands, and Bruhns (1665-1697) was able to play the violin and accompany himself with a bass played on the organ pedal-board. In the 18th century there were singers '...for whom everything in art was reduced to canary roulades and nightingale sighs or who forced their voices to show off the power of their lungs...' (Landowska 1965:157). It is great technical accomplishment coupled with the delight in sheer technical display for its own sake which has come to be associated with the virtuoso.

To this must be added another factor - that of gesture. In 1759, C. P. E. Bach (1714-1788) wrote:

.....a musician cannot move others unless he too is moved.....In languishing, sad passages, the performer must languish and grow sad. Thus will the expression of the piece be more clearly perceived by the audience.....Similarly, in lively, joyous passages, the executant must again put himself into the appropriate mood. And so, constantly varying the passions, he will barely quiet one before he rouses another.....Those who maintain that all of this can be accomplished without gesture will retract their words when, owing to their insensibility, they find themselves obliged to sit like a statue before their instrument.....Fitting expressions help the listener to understand our meaning..... (C. P. E. Bach 1759, reprinted 1974 (ed. Mitchell, J. W.):152)

This aspect of virtuosity was taken up by the 19th and 20th century virtuosi. The 'atmosphere' of the concert and the platform manner of the performer also become an aspect of virtuosity. Even Wanda Landowska (1879-1959), a player not usually associated with 'showmanship', would never have begun one of her recitals without establishing the right atmosphere - '...the lighting on stage had to be very dim before she would glide, wraith-like, onto the platform, hands clasped as if in prayer and eyes cast heavenward...' (Sachs 1982:154).

The performing artist, if he is properly to fulfil his rôle, must also be able to attract an audience. Many musicians have been able to do this by means of their 'personality' or 'charisma', which may often be a non-musical attribute.¹ These various elements - great technical accomplishment, showmanship and the possession of a charismatic personality constitute what is understood by the term 'virtuoso'. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) regarded virtuosity as '...an indispensable element of music...'²

The 19th century was an age of virtuosi, especially of the keyboard, with players like Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871), Felix Dreyschok (1818-1869), and above all, Franz Liszt. Liszt fulfilled the rôle of the virtuoso to perfection. He had a monumental technique and his concerts generated great excitement.³ His flamboyant extra-musical personality, and his later taking of minor holy orders, combined to create a character that was 'larger than life'. However, despite all his showmanship Liszt was a serious performer, who saw his task as that of co-creator with the composer.⁴ Liszt's career coincided with the development of the modern piano with its iron frame. His style of playing would have been impossible on the fortepiano of the 18th century or the grands of the early 19th century.

In 1848 Liszt retired from his life as a travelling virtuoso and settled in Weimar. During the eleven years he spent there he made the town a centre for the performance of contemporary music. He took up conducting⁵, and presented at least one new opera each year. He introduced new music by Schumann, Berlioz, Weber, Smetana, Schubert, Raff and Wagner - conducting *Tannhäuser* in 1849 and the world première of *Lohengrin* in 1850. Liszt arranged a large amount of

orchestral music for the piano, including the Beethoven Symphonies and the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz. His transferring of orchestral textures to the keyboard opened up the possibility of new pianistic sonorities, which he was able to exploit in his compositions for the instrument. As might be expected, some of Liszt's compositions were virtuoso show pieces, designed for the display of his prodigious pianistic technique. Others, however reveal him as one of the great musical minds of the century.⁶

The career of Liszt illustrates the importance of the rôle that the virtuoso can play in the art of music. It is not the possession of a great technique, or of a charismatic 'personality' in themselves which is important, but the use to which they are put. Wagner summed up the importance of the virtuoso performer as '...the intermediary of the artistic idea...' (*Gesammelte Schriften VII, 1894-9*, quoted by Jander 1980:12).

W. T. Best the Virtuoso

As with the pianist Liszt, we have no direct evidence of the extent of Best's prowess as a virtuoso performer. At the time of his death recording techniques were in their infancy, and even the Welte-Philharmonie-Orgel, which captured the organ playing of, among others, Max Reger (1873-1916) was not perfected until a decade later. However, it is possible, with the help of various clues, to build a partial picture of how Best approached the art of music making. We are aware of the potential and sound of the instruments that he played,⁷ we have descriptions of his playing from contemporary sources, and evidence of his phrasing, tempi and registration from his published compositions, arrangements and editions.

(a) Technical mastery

Best was equipped with a keyboard technique of the first-rank. He believed that a thorough grounding in piano playing was a necessary prerequisite for playing the organ (Best [1883]:2). When playing he held his hands with his fingers straight with just the tips bent, with level wrists and without the knuckles being hunched up. It is likely that Best modelled his playing on that of the pianist Thalberg (Levien 1942:13), and his own piano playing was likened to that of another organist and pianist, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) (Livesey 1926:258). The lightness of touch made possible by means of the pneumatic-lever enabled Best to approach the playing of the organ in a pianistic manner. He was also adept at playing on two keyboards at the same time (Statham 1909:225), and in his design for the organ in Bolton Town Hall he specified that the keyboards '..be brought as near to each other as possible...so that passages can readily be played on two keyboards by the same hand...' (Best 1872:7 - See Appendix 5). Sir John Stainer (1840-1901) remarked that '...Best stood alone. [Charles-Marie] Widor [(1845-1937)] might perhaps be put second to him as a player on the manuals, but only in that one respect; he could not pedal like Best...' (Levien 1942:29). It was the virtuoso quality of Best's pedalling that excited the admiration of audiences and other organists alike. Arthur Fagge (1940:1) describes the time he first heard Best play, in 1877.

.....It was at the Bow and Bromley Institute.....By turning half round I could see all the actions of his [Best's] feet which had a great fascination for me. I recall even now one of the pieces he was playing.....It was an Offertoire or Postlude by Mailly.....It was the quick semiquaver passage near the end for the pedals that impressed me so much, as his pedal work was so noiseless.....

Best's mastery of the pedals is all the more extraordinary in view of the fact that the CC pedal-board of full compass was still something of a novelty and not universally accepted during his formative years. His writing for the pedals in his compositions and arrangements reveals that he expected a pedal technique fully the equal of that of the hands on the keyboard. According to the *Musical Times* of March 1894, Best '...brought pedal playing to a perfection not hitherto attained...'.

The concensus of opinion would tend to support the view that Best was a very accurate player. Watson (1921:234) describes his technique as '...faultless...', Fagge (1940:4) refers to his '...uncanny accuracy...', and the *Musical Standard* (Vol.i, No.14, 16th February 1863:193) to '...the most unerring accuracy...'. As early as 1849, *The Times* described Best's execution as '...finished...'. Statham, who heard Best play over a fifteen-year period, could only call to mind one mistake, and that was a lapse of memory.

.....He [Best] was playing Beethoven's Funeral March from the A-flat sonata from memory, and the first bar of the Trio he played the tremolando through only a quarter of the bar instead of the half-bar. I saw him shake his head, and it was set right in the next bar..... (Statham 1909:229)

Best's own comment was '...you see, we all play wrong notes, but I play fewer than most people...' (Levien 1942:19). This accuracy can be attributed to, firstly, Best's possession of a first-class technique, and secondly, to the care he took over every performance. Healy Foster, of the organ-building firm of Brindley & Foster, described how Best prepared for the opening recital on one of their new instruments:

.....Best had been practising on it [the instrument] all day. As the doors were opened to let in the congregation Best went into the vestry and, putting his music on the table, began to study it. "You had better come outside" said Foster, "and take a walk in the sunshine". "No", answered Best, "I must study the music". "Nonsense", retorted Foster, "you've played those pieces hundreds of times". "Ah, but I must refresh my memory", said Best, "its always a good thing to refresh the memory"..... (Levien 1942:45)

The second contributory factor was Best's complete absence of nerves or 'flurry' during a performance. This has sometimes been attributed to his very slow pulse (MT, 1st August 1926:691).

(b) Registration

The large concert and church organs of the mid-19th century presented the player with enormous possibilities for the combining of tone-colours, and Best made

full use of the tonal palette at his disposal. Statham (1909:223) maintains that Best had an intuitive perception of the precise timbre which best suited the character of the music, and gives as an example the opening of the overture to Spohr's *Jessonda*, where '...the very sound of the first chord seemed to give a certain Oriental tint to the music...', the stops having been carefully chosen to give '...something different from the ordinary Great Organ tone...'. These organs also possessed the mechanical means for rapidly changing the stops. This allowed for a new approach to the art of registration which was not available to earlier generations of players. Even S. S. Wesley, if one considers the directions for registration in his anthems and organ compositions, was not markedly adventurous in this direction. Best, on the other hand, was in the vanguard of a new way of approaching the playing of the instrument.

Best's *Fantasia for the Organ* Op.1, is conventionally registered,⁸ and this, when considered alongside the style of writing would suggest that at the time it was composed [mid-1840's?] the composer did not have experience of an organ with a wide colour spectrum or the means for rapidly changing stops. However, the desire to re-create orchestral effects in terms of the organ, and the encountering of larger and more versatile instruments led Best to a more adventurous approach towards texture and registration, as can be seen in transcriptions such as the overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (Novello) and the Andante con moto from Beethoven's Symphony No.5 (Novello), both of which date from early in his career [late 1840's].

Best's approach to registration was to make full use of the capacity of the instrument to change from *ff* to *pp* literally at the push of a button, to contrast the effects of the different keyboards and to make use of the newly developed solo registers - which included reeds on heavy pressure of wind. In his transcriptions, Best will sometimes indicate the organ registration, on other occasions the dynamics and orchestration but with no registration, or sometimes a combination of the two approaches. The same inconsistency of approach can also be found in the music Best edited for organ. His edition of the Organ Sonatas by Mendelssohn (Novello) is *urtext* in its approach in that Best only reproduces Mendelssohn's dynamic markings and does not suggest any registration of his own. In the series *Organ Compositions Ancient and Modern* (Cocks) Best gives dynamic markings, but again

This musical score is a transcription for organ of a section from Mozart's Overture to *Die Zauberflöte*. It features a complex arrangement of woodwind parts. The score is organized into two systems of staves. The first system includes a Bassoon (Bv.) and a Clarinet in G (Cl. G.). The second system includes a Bassoon (Bv.), a Clarinet in G (Cl. G.), and a Bassoon (Bv.). The organ part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The woodwind parts are marked with dynamics such as *p*, *sf*, and *ff*, and include performance instructions like "Reeds." and "Reeds off." The score is numbered 114 and includes a page number 251 at the bottom.

114. Part of the Overture to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, transcribed for organ by William Thomas Best, and published as his Op.3 by Novello.

gives no suggestions for registration. However, his edition of Bach's organ works (Augener) and Handel's Organ Concertos (Novello, Augener & Boosey) Best gives detailed directions for the use of stops. These 'editions' are an invaluable source of information about a 19th century approach to the registering of these works.⁹

The *Musical Standard* of 25th April 1896 (page 273) published a description of the organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, which included a diagram of the console and the settings of the different pistons [see Chapter 9, page 195]. Although this dates from after Best's retirement it was before a successor had been appointed, and it is likely that these settings were used by Best himself. One possible piece of corroborative evidence is that Piston 5 on the Solo, Swell and Great sends out the reeds *alone* – which is not the usual sequence, and he provided a similar setting at the Royal Albert Hall, London (Statham 1909:143). Best was fond of contrasting pure reed-tone against the rest of the organ (Levien 1942:17). These piston settings are unconventional, and rather than just providing combinations of stops from *pp* to *ff*, they offer us a possible insight into the different types of sound favoured by Best.

The first Great piston sends out a solo stop – the Violoncello 8-ft., while the second sends out an Open Diapason 8-ft.. It could be that this was also used as a solo register or as the basic tone-colour to which stops from the other divisions could be added. The third piston introduces a rich *mélange* of sound, consisting of Double Open Diapason 16-ft., two Open Diapasons 8-ft. (wood & metal), Stopped Diapason 8-ft., Violoncello 8-ft. and Viola 4-ft.. The fourth piston sends out 'Full to Mixtures', while the fifth sends out the reeds – Trombone 8-ft., Ophicleide 8-ft., Trumpet 8-ft. and one of the two Clarions 4-ft.. The sixth provides the 'Full Great'.

On the Swell division, the first piston provides the Stopped Diapason 8-ft. with the Dulciana 8-ft., the second, Open Diapason 8-ft., Dulciana 8-ft. and Oboe 8-ft., while the third adds two Open Diapasons 8-ft., Stopped Diapason 8-ft. and

two Principals to the Dulciana 8-ft.. It is likely that the Dulciana was added to these combinations to provide definition rather than blend. The fourth piston provides a rich 'reedy' combination of Contra Hautboy 16-ft., Oboe 8-ft, Open Diapason 8-ft. and Stopped Diapason 8-ft.. The fifth piston provides three 8-ft. reeds - Ophicleide, Trumpet and Oboe, and the sixth, 'Full Swell'.

The first of the Choir pistons sends out the Stopped Diapason 8-ft., the Harmonic Flute 4-ft., with the Dulciana 8-ft added (?for definition). The second supplies a 'string' combination of Vox Angelica 8-ft., Viol di Gamba 8-ft., again with the defining (?) qualities of the Dulciana. The third setting is a 'solo' of Cremona 8-ft. with the Stopped Diapason 8-ft - probably added to give the reed more body of tone and a greater promptness of speech. The fourth piston gives another rich grouping of Viol di Gamba 8-ft., Stopped Diapason 8-ft., Open Diapason 8-ft., Claribella 8-ft., Dulciana 8-ft., Gamba 4-ft. and Principal 4-ft.. The fifth is another rich combination, but of a 'reedy' quality - Claribella 8-ft., Open Diapason 8-ft, Dulciana 8-ft., Stopped Diapason 8-ft., Viol di Gamba 8-ft., Harmonic Flute 4-ft., Cremona 8-ft. and Oboe 8-ft.. The sixth piston provides the 'Full Choir'.

The sixth piston of the Solo Organ sends out 'Full Solo', the remaining five sending out various 'solo' combinations.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Number 1 | Corno di Bassetto 8-ft. with Stopped Diapason 8-ft.. |
| Number 2 | Orchestral Flute 4-ft.. |
| Number 3 | Oboe (orchestral) 8-ft.. |
| Number 4 | An interesting combination of 8-ft. and 2-ft. tone - the wooden Open Diapason with the Piccolo. |
| Number 5 | The 8-ft heavy-pressure reeds - the Ophicleide and Trumpet. |

The Pedal settings were as follows:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Number 1 | Open Diapason (metal) 16-ft., Salicional 16-ft. and Principal (wood) 8-ft.. |
| Number 2 | same as for 1. |
| Number 3 | Open Diapason (metal) 16-ft., Open Diapason (wood) 16-ft., Salicional 16-ft., Bourdon 16-ft., Principal (metal) 8-ft. and and Principal (wood) 8-ft.. |
| Number 4 | Open Diapason (metal) 16-ft., Open Diapason (wood) 16-ft., Bourdon 16-ft., Salicional 16-ft., Principal (metal) 8-ft., Principal (metal) 8-ft., Quint 6-ft., Fifteenth 2-ft. and Mixture (3 ranks). |
| Number 5 | Open Diapason (metal) 16-ft., Principal (metal) 8-ft., Posaune 16-ft., Ophicleide 16-ft., Trumpet 8-ft. and Clarion 4-ft.. |

[This is the Pedal Organ equivalent of the pure reed combinations on the 5th piston of the Great, Swell and Solo divisions, the Open Diapason and Principal probably being added to improve the promptness of the speech]

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| Number 6 | 'Full Pedal' |
|----------|--------------|

It is interesting to note that the facilities for the rapid changing of stops on this instrument are sophisticated, even by late 20th century standards, and must have seemed miraculous in 1855. Each keyboard has six thumb-pistons, which give the combinations listed above. There were, in addition, two further sets of six buttons placed in the key-slips of the Choir and Great keyboards. Those on the left (1A - 6A) which give the Great and Pedal combination settings together, and are duplicated by six foot-pedals. The buttons on the right-hand key-slip (1B - 6B) '...act upon the corresponding numbers on the four manuals and pedals simultaneously...' - in other words, 'General' pistons, which Sumner (1955:23) maintained were adjustable - not at the console, but inside the instrument, by means of tapes and rollers.

Although it cannot be proved conclusively that these are the actual piston settings used by Best, they do reflect the registration directions in Best's published works. It must also be remembered that in these published directions Best envisaged an 'ideal' organ, not necessarily that at St. George's Hall. For instance, he often asks for a 'Clarionet' on the Choir, whereas at St. George's Hall the Choir has a 'Cremona' but the 'Clarionet' is on the Solo division. What these piston settings do reveal is a liking for rich sounds, which is very much in keeping with 19th century orchestral writing. Although he included mutation stops like the Nazard and Tierce in certain of his organ designs [see Appendix 5] Best gives no indications as to how he used them. He would also produce grand effects where possible. When he gave the opening recital (in London) on the Hill organ intended for the Town Hall in Sydney, Australia, he wrote in his programme note for Bach's 'St. Ann' Fugue '...the concluding division introduces a second fugal subject, also of florid character, and employs the full strength of the organ throughout, the original theme entering with grand effect on the deep sounding tone of the pedal organ towards the close. In this last section the great pedal reed of 64-ft. sounding length will be heard...' (MO, Vol.xii, No.142, 1st July 1889:487)

Best did not just rely on pistons, but made great use of hand registration.

.....to see him [Best] re-arrange the stops while he was playing a terrific solo on the pedals was to witness a most elegant and deliberate piece of detachment..... (Levien 1942:28)

He would never interrupt the flow of a composition for the purpose of changing registration during a performance (Fagge 1940:4&5). Best scorned the use of assistants for manipulating the stops with the words '...I don't care to be attended by coroners' officers when I play...', explaining that '...you might as well be a corpse, mightn't you, if you can't manage the stops yourself!...' (Levien 1942:29). Best's playing and control over the instruments must have come as a revelation to his contemporaries, his '...shapely hands and feet flying over the keyboards and deftly dealing with stops and pistons...' (Levien 1942:49).

In common with other executive musicians of his day, Best was unconcerned with that very 20th century concept, historical authenticity. With the music of his contemporaries and from the past, as with Liszt and von Bülow when they performed the music of Bach on the piano, Best had the artistic self-confidence to re-create the music in terms of the instrument and musical aesthetic of his own time. Appendix 4 is devoted to analytical examples of Best's registrations for J. S. Bach's organ music, taken from his published output, which help to give a clearer picture of the manner in which he approached the art of performance.¹⁰

(c) Best's Performances

Contemporary reports on Best's playing are remarkably consistent throughout his career. In 1849 *The Times* described his execution as '...finished...', and two years later the *Musical World* (Vol.xxvi, No.37, 13th September 1851) was describing him as '...one of the most accomplished organists in Europe...'. The *Bolton Weekly Guardian* called him '...the prince of players...' (24th October 1874), and in 1889, *Musical Opinion* (Vol.xii, No.142, 1st July 1889:483) asserted that his reputation '...as the greatest organist in the world is fully deserved...'. Sir Henry Wood (1938:35) described Best as '...my ideal of a great organist...', and the great pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow gave the following tribute in the *Glasgow Herald* (23rd November 1877:4):

.....'If I would longer listen to.....a player like Mr. Best I would, were I not grown too old, jeopardise my pianistical career, begin to study the organ, where certainly I would be able to display more eloquence as Beethoven and Chopin's speaker, and moreover, not get annoyed by rivals in petticoats. In short having been exceptionally fatigued by your consecutive concerts and numerous rehearsals, I listened with the most eager attention from the first to the last note of Mr. Best's recital'.....

These remarks from a musician who was '...terrible tempered, acid of tongue, sharply intelligent, autocratic...' and who was a '...mighty figure in German music for three decades...' (Schonberg 1977:163), and a champion of Wagner, Liszt and Brahms, help to put Best's achievements as a performer in their proper context - he was a player worthy to be ranked with the best in the world.

DR HANS VON HULOW AND THE NEW HALLS ORGAN.—Regarding the organ recital given on Wednesday evening, Dr Von Hulow says:—"I never met with an organ so good in Germany, the instruments there not having the same amount of expression and flexibility—most delicate and exquisite sounds; that bearing the *Lydian* and *Chromatic* was to me quite a new sensation. If I would longer listen to an organ like this and a player like Mr Best I would, were I not grown too old, jeopardise my pianistical career, begin to study the organ, where certainly I would be able to display much more eloquence as Beethoven's and Chopin's speaker, and, moreover, not get annoyed by rivals in pollicularia. In short, despite having been exceptionally fatigued by your consecutive concerts and numerous rehearsals, I listened with the most eager attention from the first to the last note of Mr Best's recital."

115. 'The Glasgow Herald', 23rd November 1877, page 4.

The *Guardian* of 11th September 1872 printed a very perceptive review of a recital that Best gave at the Lisson Grove workshop of Bishop on the organ intended for installation in Bombay Town Hall, which helps to throw more light on his style of playing.

.....without these facilities supplied by the modern organ, such playing as Mr. Best's would, we should suppose, be impossible. The rapid execution, especially with the feet, in which he is unsurpassed, must have been out of the question a hundred years ago. Nothing could be finer than his playing of the 'Passacaglia' in C minor, of Sebastian Bach with a theme given out on the pedals. Execution is, in fact, Mr. Best's great point. His phrasing is apt to become a little exaggerated, and he carries his old fondness for quickening and slackening the time in separate passages to an excessive extent. Phrasing on the organ is, undoubtedly, a more difficult art than upon the violin or the pianoforte, and to the older school of players it was almost unknown. Still, it is absolutely essential to a perfect performance, as it is the very life and soul of expression. In the same somewhat questionable taste, Mr. Best now and then indulges in too liberal use of additional notes, by way of filling up the comparatively thin writing of the old composers. There can be no doubt, indeed, that Handel always designed his organ works, and his orchestral works too, to be filled up to a certain extent at the performer's or

accompanyist's discretion. But Mr. Best sometimes uses this liberty with, as we think, an excessive freedom, and the result is a sort of cloudiness and thickness of sound, impairing both melodies and harmonies, instead of enriching them.....

In this review Best's immense technical skill is acknowledged, together with the observation that his style of playing would have been impossible without the new developments in organbuilding technology. The criticism of Best's approach to the 'filling-out' of Handel's sparse textures is justified as a study of his various arrangements and editions of that composer's organ concertos. Another point raised is of greater interest. On this occasion Best's phrasing was '...a little exaggerated...', and yet, of another performance, the *Musical Standard* (Vol.vii, No.176, 14th December 1867:371) wrote that '...the G minor fugue of Bach was clearly and smoothly played, without phrasing of any perceptible kind, the "great effect" aimed at by the performer being apparently a diminuendo and succeeding crescendo about the middle of the composition...'. Another commentator (Statham 1909:223) speaks of Best's '...crisp and clean *staccato* touch, every note from beginning to end [standing] out distinct and clear...' in Bach's Prelude and Fugue in G minor. This could indicate an erratic or inconsistent approach towards performance, but it is more likely that Best altered his approach to suit the character of each piece as he perceived it. It would appear that each piece was strongly characterised. *Musical Opinion* (No.214, 1st July 1895:627) described Best's treatment of Bach's Passacaglia in C minor (BWV582) as '...a free and varied registration that is quite cheerful compared with the old way of playing the noble work...', adding that '...in some respects Mr. Best probably overdoes the thing, and his registration is, besides, only possible on a large organ...'. Statham (1909:223) writes of Best's performance of the same work '...The treatment of each with the exact kind of tone and combination of stops, loud or soft, which its character required was one of the most refined pieces of aestheticism in playing that I ever heard; it was absolutely perfect...'. Bryson (1926:1212) describes Best's performance of the Prelude and Fugue in C, the Fugue being played so slowly '...that one felt it to be impossible for him to continue it without increasing the pace.....He [Best] built up that fugue, it grew bigger and bigger slowly, imperceptibly, until, when the final pedal entry came, it has remained in my memory as one of the most enormous things I have ever heard in music...'. The *Sydney Morning* of the 12th August 1890 reported that Best played the G minor Fugue by

Bach '...so as to remove it altogether from the 'dry' character which, according to general idea, is supposed to pertain to compositions of this class...'

The *Guardian* report also refers to Best's use of rubato – '...his old fondness for quickening and slackening the time in separate passages...'. This would appear to have been a feature of his style of playing. In its review of Best's opening recital at the Royal Albert Hall, London, the *Musical Times* (August 1871) wrote '...in the Prelude and Fugue of Bach in E flat (St. Ann's) we scarcely agreed with the occasional alteration of tempo...'. Best's played Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor not in a '...noisy and mechanical manner...', but '...with him [Best] every phrase had its own individual tone-colouring, and although the settled tempo is adhered to in the fugue, the toccata is treated altogether in the style of the 'free fantasias'...' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th August 1890).

The responsiveness of the action of an organ, and the acoustic in which the instrument was placed would have had an effect on Best's phrasing of the music and also the tempo adopted. At St. George's Hall, for example, because of the echo, he '...took all tempi considerably more slowly than usual...' (Bryson 1926:1212). Best would also calculate the effect that the sound of the organ would have in different parts of the building. J. H. Maunder related that after Best had practised his programme all day, '....A short time before the congregation came in, Best sat down in various pews in different parts of the church and sitting there with folded arms and deep thoughtfulness, contemplated the organ from those aspects...calculating in imagination the impression the sound of the organ would make on people sitting at different distances from the organ and, in accordance with these sensitive imaginings, deciding the pace of the pieces, the length of his pauses, and other niceties of his performance...' (Levien 1942:46). Fagge (1940:5) maintains that Best had the power of welding a composition together, Watson (1921:234) also adding that:

.....As a recitalist he [Best] had a marvellous faculty of compelling the listener to forget the performer in the music itself, surely an attribute of the highest interpretative genius.....

(d) Repertoire

As was seen in Chapter 11, Best, as civic organist at Liverpool, was expected to perform music of a more popular nature for certain of his audiences. That he did this, and played transcriptions, both with an unprecedented brilliance, should not obscure the fact that Best, like Liszt, was a serious musician. His knowledge of the legitimate organ repertoire was extensive, and throughout his career he championed the organ music of Bach, Mendelssohn and Handel, by performance, editing and arranging.

.....it was in playing Bach's organ music that Best was at his highest. It has been stupidly represented in print that he was mainly a player of show pieces. Nothing could be more untrue. He was an enthusiast for Bach, and I never heard anyone equal him as a player of Bach's organ works. He elicited effects from them that one had hardly realised before..... (Statham:1909:222&223)

Best lavished the same care and attention on every piece he played, and fast movements were never turned into a mere display of speed (Levien 1942:19). The vast range of music covered by Best in his recitals can be seen from the concert programmes listed in Appendix 3.

(e) Platform manner

At St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Best would ascend to the organ by steps which were then hidden from the audience. He would mount these slowly, wait for a moment out of sight, draw himself to his usual upright position, and walk on, holding his spectacles in his hand. He would bow to the audience, and seat himself in an armchair beside a table upon which was placed his music. After sitting there for a minute or so, looking at the audience, he would pick up a piece of music and go to the organ (Levien 1942:17). Best would never swing his legs over the organ stool, but would draw it back, step onto the pedals, draw up the stool and sit down (Harrison nd:10&11). He prepared his registration in a slow and deliberate manner (Bryson 1926:1212). Whilst playing he managed all the stop changes himself, and also turned his own pages, which he managed without ever missing a note. He achieved this by either turning early or late, whenever a hand could be spared for

the task (Fagge 1940:4&5). When he played '...Best could never be seen to make the slightest 'secondary motion', not even during the most intricate pedal passage...' (Mansfield 1918:232). Best would return to the armchair for two or three minutes in between the various pieces in his programme, '...thus giving his audience a breathing space, as well as securing a little break for himself. Each work, therefore, had time to become a separate entity, instead of a *pot-pourri*, and the period of silence before and after some great work was often felt to be sacramental...' (Watson 1921:234). This was very different from the behaviour of the conductor Jullien, who sank 'exhausted' into an armchair between the items at his concerts (Thistlethwaite 1977:76). In Best's case it was to gain a rapport with his audience, which was otherwise denied to him because of the usual position of the console on English organs. He was constantly critical of this position, preferring a console which was slightly detached and reversed in, after the manner of Cavallé-Coll '...instead of the stupid arrangement of most organ builders, who calmly seat the player fairly inside [the organ], and efface his personality by obliging him to play with his back to everyone...' (Best 1879¹¹). Best's platform manner at St. George's Hall must have created an 'atmosphere' of expectation. At concerts of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, at the Philharmonic Hall, Best insisted on '...coming on the platform along with the vocal principals, and always ascended the orchestra steps amid an outburst of applause...' (*Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 13th August 1926).

Best's showmanship at concerts was of an unusual order. His platform manner would help to create the expectant 'atmosphere' he required for his performance. The sound of a virtuoso performance, contrasted with the apparent effortlessness of its production and with the absence of the usual virtuoso keyboard 'gestures', becomes itself a form of showmanship. Best was a showman, paradoxically, by suppressing the conventional forms of showmanship.

(f) Best the 'personality'

Best's personal life was kept very private. As the *Musical Herald* (January 1890:291) stated, '...it would be difficult to manufacture gossip about him [Best], and we will not try...'. Best made no effort to cultivate the outward appearance

associated with the popular idea of the virtuoso performer. There is nothing of the gaunt, dishevelled appearance of a Paganini, or of 'Mephistopheles turned Abbé' in the manner of Liszt. In looks Best was the typical Victorian gentleman with an aristocratic manner.

.....Had he [Best] been a long-haired Pole, or a lean and lankey Paganini, reams of paper would have been spoilt, and pints of good printers' ink spread, in the public setting forth of his virtues and vices both moral, social and professional..... (Mansfield 1918:209)

However, Best was renowned for his wit and sarcasm. His outspokenness and brushes with authority, to say nothing of his outbursts of violent behaviour, would have created for him a public 'persona' which could compare with that of Liszt or Paganini. He was, as the *Liverpool Review* (February 1894:3) put it, a 'character'. It is quite possible that people were drawn to his concerts initially because of this quality as well as by his reputation as a performer.

The Travelling Virtuoso

(a) General

The travelling virtuoso pianist or violinist was a common phenomenon before the 19th century. The 18th century could even boast a travelling organist in the person of Abbé George Joseph Vogler (1749-1814) who travelled throughout Europe with an organ called the *Orchestrion*, playing such pieces as '*Allegro - Swiss Cow-Song, in the Lydian Mode*', '*Chinese Air, deciphered by G.J.V. from the original notes of a Missionary*' and '*Sea Combat, complete with drum-rolls, movement of ships, engaging of the enemy, cannons, cry of the wounded*' (Williams 1966:93).

The rapid development of the railway network in the first half of the 19th century made it possible for a musician to hold a permanent position and also travel around the country extensively, on a regular basis, in order to give concerts. W. T. Best performed three times a week at St. George's Hall, Liverpool (except during

the meetings of the Law Courts), but was also able to be organist at the Royal Albert Hall, London, for a time, and travel around the country to give concerts at churches, chapels, concert halls and in the workshops of organ builders. In addition to England, Best played in Scotland and Wales, and journeyed as far as Ireland, to the Ulster Hall in Belfast. He performed regularly in London, at the Monday Popular Concerts at St. James's Hall, the Bow and Bromley Institute, and at the Royal Albert Hall. Best's preparation for each concert was meticulous. He would never take chances '...always trying over an item before playing it in public, no matter how simple [and] irrespective of the number of times he might have played it before...' (Harrison nd:11).

It is possible that Best was responsible for the introduction of the term 'recital' for an organ concert, Mansfield (1918:248) asserting that it was first used for Best's concert at Union Chapel, Islington, on 4th December 1867, although Scholes 1955:864) is more cautious, only suggesting that it was used on this occasion. Whether or not Best was the first player to introduce annotated programmes, their appearance at his opening recitals at the Colston Hall, Bristol, were described by the *Musical Standard* (Vol.xiii, No.324, 15th October 1870:169) as '...a novel feature...'.

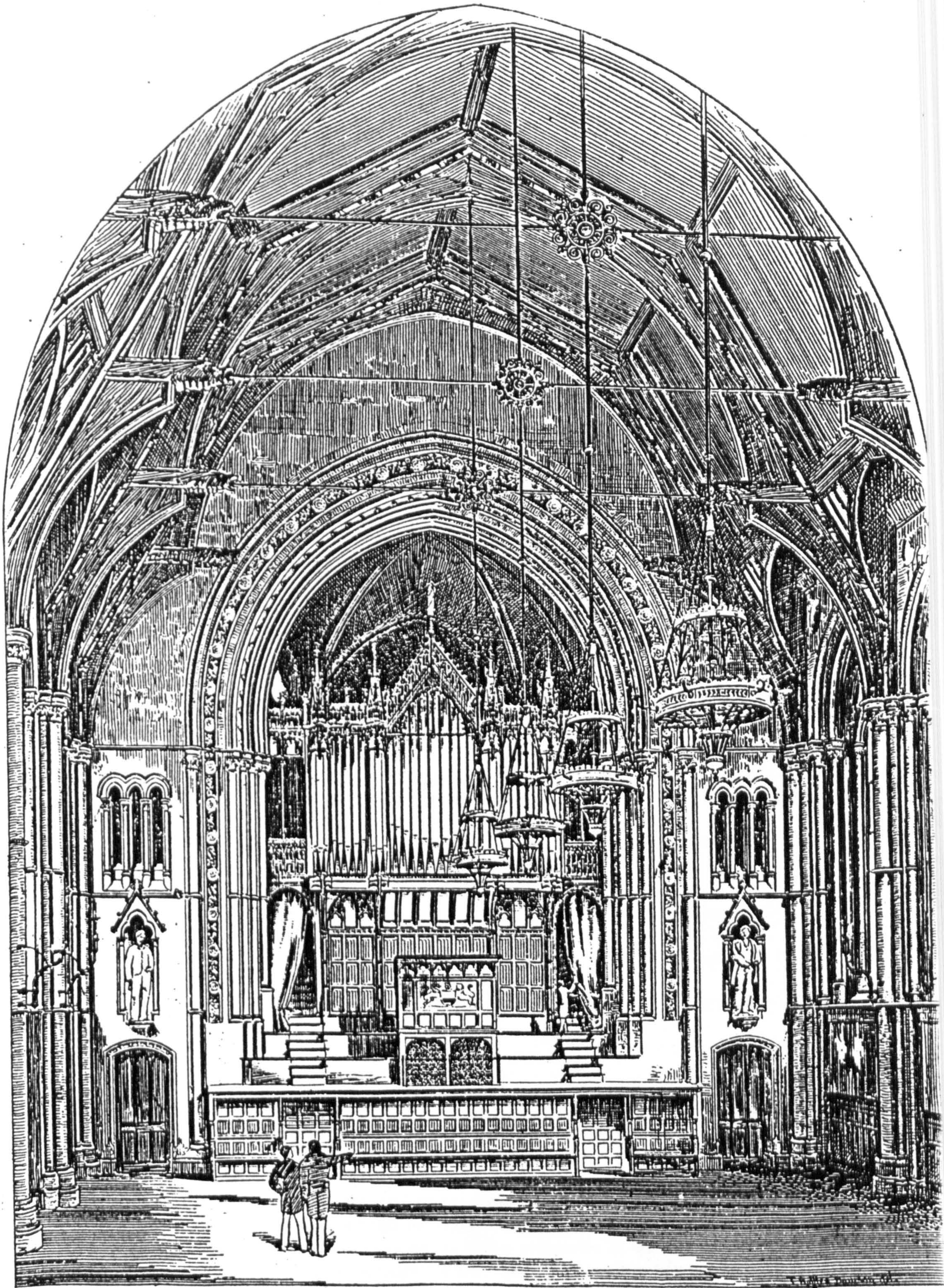
Anecdotes, which must have helped to sustain Best's public 'persona', abound from the concerts he gave away from Liverpool. He is reputed to have left churches when the organ he was 'opening' began to cipher (Levien 1942:37), and after a recital in South Devon, Best suggested that the builder take the organ out to sea and sink it in the depths of Tor Bay (Mansfield 1918:226). At a church in Forest Hill, after Best had played a number of rather severe pieces, one of the Deacons asked him (by means of a note) whether he would play *The Green Hill* [by Gounod]. Best replied that he had '...not the *Green Hill* with him but would *The Blue Alsatian Mountain* do as well?...' (Fagge 1940:4).

(b) Town Halls

As has been seen, the new Town Halls, with their magnificent concert organs, became important centres for music making in the 19th century. W. T. Best as the premier player of the time, and organist at the grandest of these halls, gave the inaugural recital on many of these new instruments, in particular, the following:

1849	The Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool.
1855	St. George's Hall, Liverpool (not the 'official' opening recital - see Chapter 9).
1867	St. John's Hall, Penzance.
1870	The Colston Hall, Bristol.
1871	The Royal Albert Hall, London.
1873	The Albert Hall, Sheffield.
1874	The Town Hall, Bolton.
1877	St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow.
1878	The Town Hall, Manchester.
1886	The Free Trade Hall, Manchester.
1893	The Queen's Hall, London.

Best was sometimes retained as a consultant when these concert organs were planned. He was responsible for recommending Cavallé-Coll to build the instrument for Manchester Town Hall (and also possibly for the Albert Hall, Sheffield). Best's *multum-in-parvo* design for Bolton Town Hall probably represents his ideal of a concert organ (see Appendix 5). It was his playing at the opening recital of the organ at St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, designed by himself and Henry Smart, which so impressed Hans von Bülow. In giving the inaugural performances at the Royal Albert Hall and the Queen's Hall in London, Best assumed his rightful place at the head of the profession.



116. The Cavallé-Coll organ in Manchester Town Hall.

(i) The Royal Albert Hall

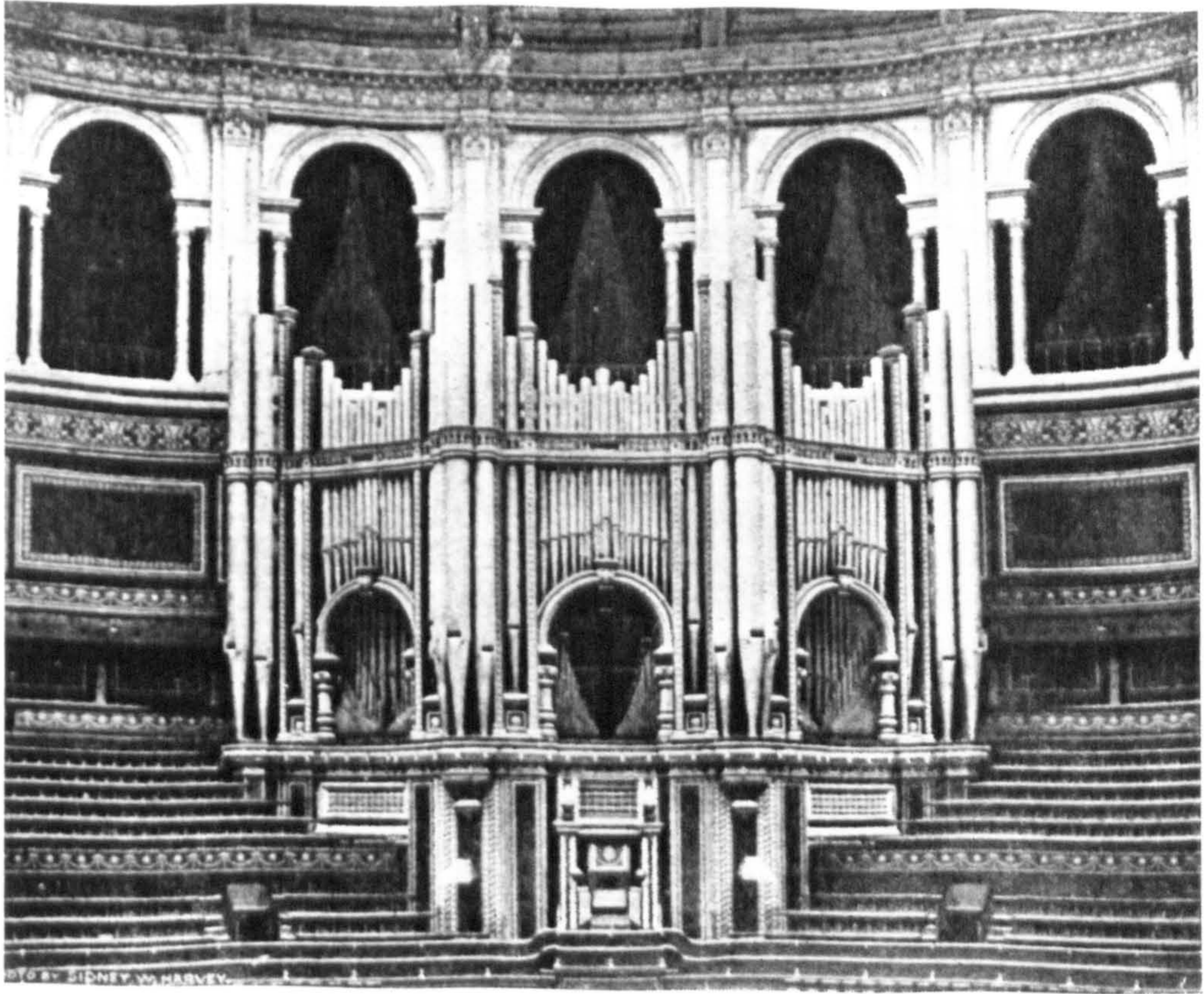
The Executive Committee of the Royal Albert Hall received a letter from Best, which was read at their meeting of 16th of January 1871, '...offering his services for the Hall...'.¹² The *Musical Standard* of 21st January 1871 (Vol.xiv, No.338:35) reported that '...Mr. Best...will "accept" the appointment of organist to the Albert Hall, Kensington: whether this means that the appointment has been actually offered to him, is left to inference...'. To this piece of self-promotion, the *Musical Standard* of 11th February 1871 (Vol.xiv, No.341:68) humourously advised the Albert Hall authorities that '...Considering all things, you cannot do better than your Best...'

Best played the organ at the opening ceremony on 29th March 1871 (Clark: 57-59). The organ, which had been built by Henry Willis (see Appendix 5), was 'opened' by Best on the 18th of July 1871, when he played the following programme:

PART 1	
Organ Concerto No.2	HANDEL
Choral Song and Fugue	S. S. WESLEY
Andante Grazioso (1st performance)	E. J. HOPKINS
March in A minor	W. T. BEST
Grand Prelude and Fugue in E flat	J. S. BACH
PART 2	
Organ Sonata No.1	MENDELSSOHN
Andante Pastorale and Fugue in E	W. T. BEST
Air with variations and Finale Fugato (1st performance)	H. SMART
Prelude and Fugue in D ^[13]	J. S. BACH

The commissioning of the piece by Hopkins of which Best gave the first performance at this concert, gave rise to the following anecdote:

.....One night he [Hopkins] was aroused from his bed by a violent knocking at his front door. Putting his head through the window he saw Best standing on the pavement. "Hopkins", called out Best, "I've got to play a programme at the Albert Hall composed by living English [and] dead Germans. I want you to write me something for the occasion..... (Harrison nd:29)^[14]



117. The Organ in the Royal Albert Hall.



118. The opening of the Royal Albert Hall on 29th March 1871.

This inaugural concert received favourable reviews in the musical press.¹⁵ Over the following weeks Best gave a series of recitals on the instrument. There were also recitals by organists from Europe, including one by Anton Bruckner (1824-1896). Best's playing was compared favourably with the playing of these continental organists.¹⁶ Best said of them '..."Well...it is curious; they seemed to have no notion of effects; they pulled out all the stops in the organ, and then just wallowed in it"..." (Statham 1909:238).

In June 1871, the Council of the Royal Albert Hall sent a letter to the seat holders suggesting private performances of 'Sacred Music' after '...the hours of Divine Service on Sunday...'.¹⁷ The first of these was given on the 23rd July 1871, when Best played the following programme:

Overture to the Oratorio <i>Sampson</i>	HANDEL
<i>Ave Maria</i>	ARCADELT
(Air and Chorus composed in the 17th century)	
Allegretto Cantabile	MENDELSSOHN
(From the Symphony to the <i>Hymn of Praise</i>)	
March for a Church Festival	W. T. BEST
Chorale: <i>Blessed Jesus we are here</i>	J. S. BACH
Fugue on the Chorale: <i>We all believe in one God</i>	J. S. BACH
Adagio Religioso (with vox humana)	A. GUILMANT
Chorus: <i>Hallelujah (Mount of Olives)</i>	BEETHOVEN

(Archives of the Royal Albert Hall)

In 1872 'Penny Subscription Concerts' were proposed at the Royal Albert Hall, and Best was to take part in these, the purpose of the concerts being '...to enable all classes to enjoy Music in the Royal Albert Hall...'.¹⁸ It can be seen from some pencil additions to a draft notice of these concerts that Best's fee was to be £2.

Best's appointment as organist at the Royal Albert Hall, over the heads of all other English organists, both metropolitan and provincial, consolidated his position as head of the profession. Once again, Best was to preside at a large

organ (the Albert Hall organ was bigger than that at St. George's Hall) which was mechanically advanced. He was to take part in concerts which were either to be spiritually uplifting (Sunday 'Sacred Music'), or aimed at the education and enjoyment of 'all classes' (Penny Subscription Concerts). The Hall itself was built as a memorial to the Prince Consort, on land formerly occupied by Prince Albert's brainchild, the Great Exhibition of 1851. At no time was Best closer to the very heart of the Victorian ideal.

For a while Best combined his duties in London with those in Liverpool, but after a few years he relinquished the position at the Royal Albert Hall.

ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

Sacred Music.

SUNDAY 23rd JULY, 1871.

OVERTURE TO THE ORATORIO "SAMSON" . . . Howly.

AN ANTI-CANTATA A.
Author's name composed in the 17th

ALLEGRO CANTABILE N.
From the Symphony to the "Hymn of Praise."

MARCH FOR A CHURCH FESTIVAL W. T. Best.

CHORALE "Blessed Jesus, we are here;" . . . Bach.
and
 FUGUE ON THE CHORALE, "We all believe in one God."

ADAGIO RELIGIOSO (with vox humana) . . . Alex. Guilmant.

CHORUS "HALLELUJAH," (Mount of Olives) . . . Beethoven.

119. W. T. Best's programme of 'Sacred Music', 23rd July 1871.
 [Archives of the Royal Albert Hall]

Penny Concerts
1872

2 Review

ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

Kewington Gore

PENNY SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS.

Under the authority of the Executive Committee of the Hall—

- H.R.H. The DUKE OF EDINBURGH, K.G.—*Chairman.*
- The Right Hon. H. A. Bruce, M.P.—*Deputy-Chairman.*
- Major-General Sir Thomas Biddulph, K.C.B. _____
- Edgar A. Bowring, Esq., C.B., M.P. _____
- Henry Cole, Esq, C.B. _____
- John Fowler, Esq., _____
- Henry Thring, Esq. _____

CE

run on

1. To enable all classes to enjoy Music in the Royal Albert Hall the Executive Committee will give twelve Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall on Thursday evenings in February, March, April and May.

2. The Concerts will consist of glees and songs and instrumental music, Organist, Mr. Best.

3. Subscription tickets for the twelve Concerts will be as follows:—

the price
blue
transmission

Picture Gallery	One Shilling.	or 3d	<i>at the entrance</i>
Orchestra	Two Shillings	or 6d	"
Balcony Seats	Three Shillings	or 9d	"
Arena Stalls	Six Shillings.	or 1/5	"
Amphitheatre Stalls	Twelve Shillings.	or 3s	"

4. ~~Payment at the doors on the Evenings to be three times these charges.~~

5. Tickets are now ready and may be had at the Royal Albert Hall and the usual Agents.

1 Feb: 1872

	£
Green	15
Best	2
Solo	5
Hall	50
	<hr/>
	72

Mr Lazarus - Clarinet
 Howell -
 Flute
 Trumpet
 Oboe
 Double bass
 Bassoon

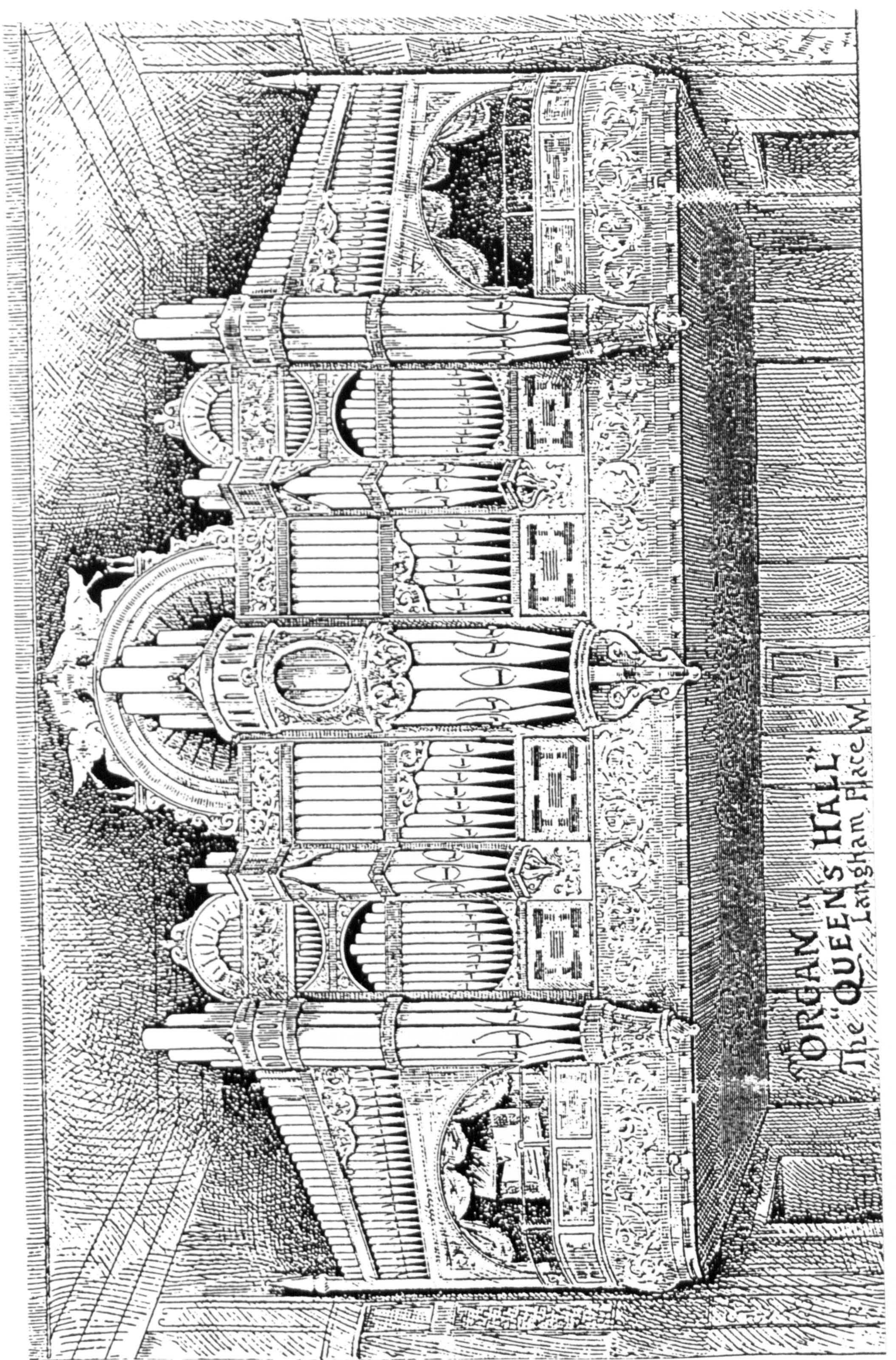
121. Sheet showing Best's fee for the 'Penny Subscription Concerts'
 [Archives of the Royal Albert Hall]

(ii) The Queen's Hall

The Albert Hall had been built to the memory of Prince Albert. The Queen's Hall was built in honour of Queen Victoria. In 1887, the Golden Jubilee year of the Queen, it was decided to build a new concert hall on the site next to All Soul's Church, Langham Place, leases on this site having been acquired by the crown. It was to be called either the Victoria Hall or the Queen's Hall, this latter eventually being decided upon. The design of the hall featured 17 exits into 3 streets, with the grand circle at ground level. The original seating capacity was for 2,492 people, and there was a smaller recital hall which seated 500. Because of its central location, it soon became the main concert hall in London, and was the home of the 'Promenade Concerts' until it was destroyed by enemy action on the night of the 10th and 11th May 1941 (Orga 1974:41).

The organ for the hall was built by Messrs. William Hill and Sons, and was placed in a gallery above the orchestra. The case was designed by T. E. Knightly, the architect of the hall, with the console placed at one end '...in a diagonal position, so arranged as to afford the performer a convenient view of the conductor below...' (MO, 1st August 1893:659), but which W. T. Best thought was '..."out of the way"...' (Levien 1942:44).

The official opening concert took place on December 2nd 1893, but the organ was first heard at the first of two unofficial concerts, put on by Robert Newman the manager of the hall, on the 25th and 27th of November. Best took part in the concert on the 25th, and the *Musical Times* of December 1893 reported that he '...revealed the capabilities of the magnificent organ, and at the same time illustrated his own, in pieces by Handel, Bach, Wesley, Smart and himself...'. This was the last of the great concert Hall organs that Best was to inaugurate. It seems singularly appropriate that it should be in a hall built in honour of Queen Victoria, in view of the fact that his career was indissolubly linked to the ethos of her reign.



122. The Organ in the Queen's Hall, London.

The International Virtuoso

Best had a reputation that was not only national but international. Some commentators have asserted that his fame was actually greater abroad and that he was known to many continental musicians ('Feste', MT, November 1942:339), Statham (1909:216) suggesting that if they knew of no other English musician they had heard of Best. His tutor, *The Art of Organ Playing* (Novello), was used in the conservatoires of Brussels and Milan (Levien, MMR, September 1939:197). Among European composers who dedicated pieces to Best were Lemmens (a volume of *Fantasias in the Free Style*) and Dubois (*Fiat Lux* from *Douze Pièces Nouvelles*). That Best was well-known in America can be inferred from the following letter, written by the American organist, Clarence Eddy, to Henry Morton Dunham, an organist in New England, on 27th January 1878:

.....You heard that Mr. T. Best is in this country! I know it was reported that he is coming, but I do not believe it. He can make more money by staying in England besides he wouldn't know what to do with the majority of our organs, which are so devoid of mechanical appliances when compared with those upon which he is accustomed to play - I met him in Liverpool and in London - heard him play in St. George's Hall in the former place, and in the Royal Albert Hall in the latter - he has great facility of execution.....
(Duke University, North Carolina, U.S.A., Perkins Library - 2410 - Glen Harvey Papers)

Best also had some American pupils including Everett E. Truette, organist, composer and author of *Organ Registration - A Comprehensive Treatise* (1919, Thompson, Boston).

Best also performed abroad. The *Musical Herald* (January 1890:292) stated that '...Mr. Best has frequently played in the churches of Paris...', although it is not made clear whether he played these instruments in public concerts or merely privately. Best did perform publicly in Rome, and in Sydney, Australia, but a projected tour of America had to be abandoned because of a deterioration in Best's health.

(a) Italy

In the winter of 1881–1882, Best had a serious illness, and visited Italy in order to recuperate his health (MO, Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:387). It is also possible that he took this opportunity to visit relatives on his wife's side of the family. Whilst there, he gave an organ recital at the American Church on the Via Nazionale in Rome. Some writers have suggested that the recital was given at the suggestion of Liszt, whilst others merely that he was one of the members of the audience.¹⁹ Although the writer has been unable to locate any evidence to support this view, it is quite likely that Liszt was present, and may even have played a part in inviting Best to play. Liszt spent the winter of 1881–1882 in Rome, and his former pupil and son-in-law, Hans von Bülow had been impressed by Best's playing in Glasgow in 1877. It may well have been the case that Best was known, by repute, to the musical intelligensia of continental Europe.

The *Musical Opinion* of 1st March 1882 (Vol.v, No.54:217) reported the concert in the following words:

.....Mr. W. T. Best, the organist of Liverpool Town Hall [sic], lately gave an organ recital in the American Church, Via Nazionale, Rome. The British, German, and Belgian Ministers, as well as all the musical notabilities in the 'eternal' city were present.....

It is quite possible that Liszt and his pupil Giovanni Sgambati (1841–1914) were amongst the 'musical notabilities' present on that occasion as claimed by Mackerness (1980:663). Enquiries by the writer to the American Church, the Biblioteca dell'Instituto Nazionale D'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte, and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale 'Vittorio Emanuele II' in Rome, have failed to unearth a copy of Best's programme or a report of the concert in the Italian newspapers.

Whilst in Italy, Best obviously interested himself in the organs of the country, and the composers who wrote for the instrument. He edited a sizeable amount of organ-music by Italian composers such as Barbieri, Diana, Gambini, Morandi, Fumagalli, Moriconi and Zipoli. His impressions of Italian organs were published in the following article in *Musical Opinion* (Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:387) immediately upon his return.

MR. BEST ON ITALIAN ORGANS - The tone of the organs in the chief Italian cities is of extremely musical quality, great attention being paid to the harmonic and mixture stops, each of which is tempered and artistically dealt with from the lowest to the highest pipe, imparting to the full organ both sweetness and grandeur. Italian organ builders also attach small importance to "reed" or imitative stops, which are confined in every case to the actual compass of the instrument sought to be represented, and are only used in special passages on their own merits. The "terzo mano", or octave coupler, peculiar to Italian organs, imparts varied and additional effect in the hands of a skilful organist, and has the valuable property of rendering many stops of acute pitch entirely unnecessary. In the important matter of the pedal organ, and the extension of its compass, much remains to be accomplished.

In October 1882, Best was in correspondence with A. J. Hipkins, the authority on early keyboard instruments, on the subject of the 'short octave' in the old Italian organs (BL Add. MS 41636, f. 330 - see Appendix 2).

In June 1882, Best resumed his recitals at St. George's Hall, Liverpool. As *Musical Opinion* (Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:387) reported, '...the corporation organist, Mr. W. T. Best, made his welcome reappearance at two organ performances in St. George's Hall, after a long and serious illness and a sojourn in Italy to recruit his health...'. It was fitting that his first piece should have been the Sonata in C# minor by Edoardo Perelli (1842-1885).

(b) Australia

On the 4th June 1889 Best had given a recital (see Appendix 3) on the organ Messrs. Hill had built for the Town Hall, Sydney, N.S.W., and which had been temporarily erected in Hill's workshop prior to being dismantled and shipped

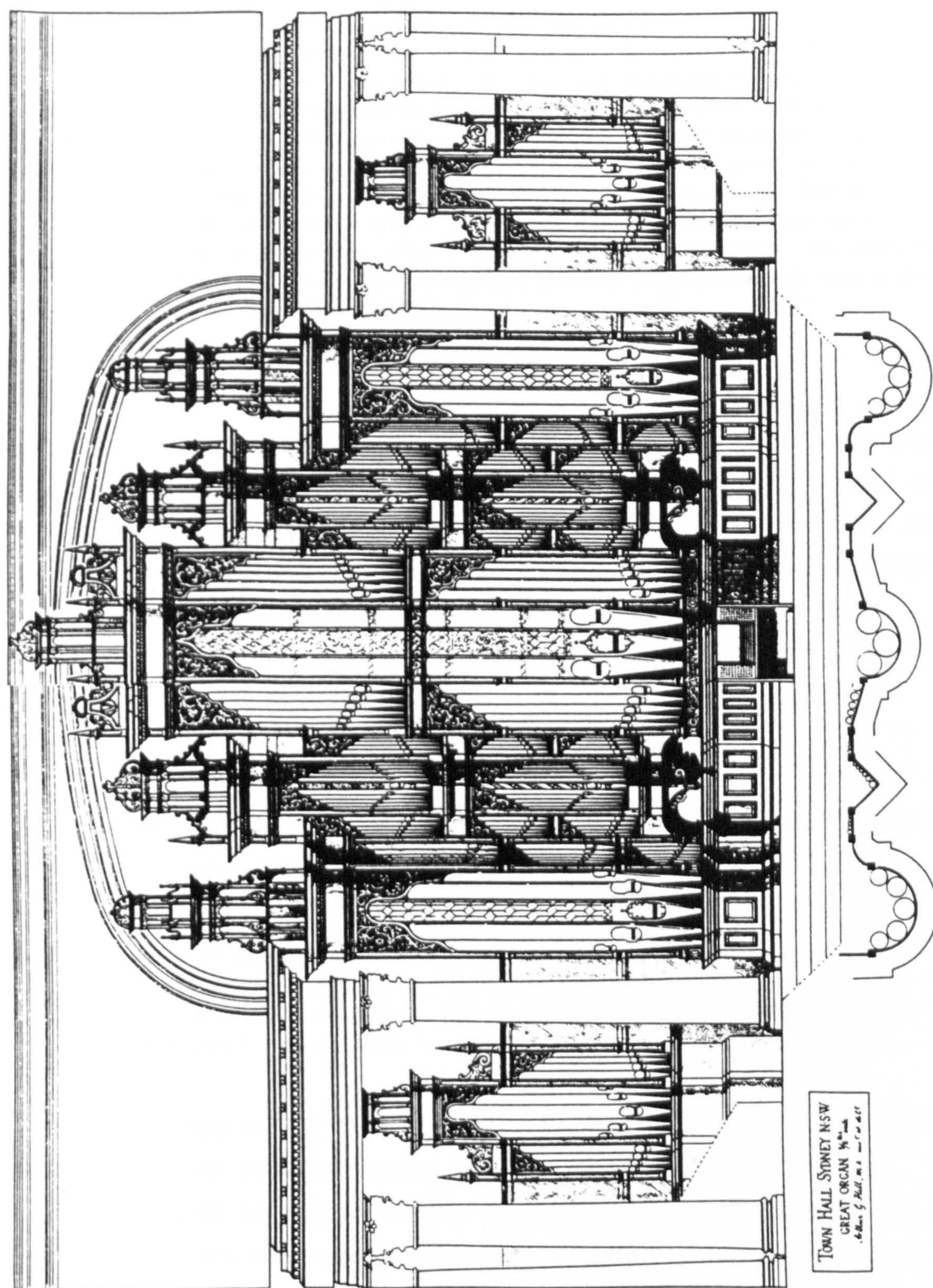
to Australia. The instrument, which was claimed by the builders to be the largest in the world had 126 speaking stops, distributed over five manual and pedal divisions. The most remarkable feature of the design was the 64-ft. reed stop on the pedal division. The organ case was designed by Mr. Arthur G. Hill, M.A., F.S.A, in the Northern Renaissance Style of the seventeenth century. After Best's opening recital in London, further recitals were given by Edwin Lemare, W. S. Hoyte and Dr. F. Bridge. All the recitalists expressed themselves as being well pleased with the instrument: Best found the instrument '...a marvel of excellence in both tone and mechanism...', Hoyte declared that it was '...the very finest organ in every respect I have ever played upon...', and Bridge that it was '...the finest organ ever built by an English builder...' (C.F., 26/238:2831). The organ was dismantled and packed in ninety-four crates, and shipped to Australia on the cargo steamer *Gulf of Venice*, which sailed on 12th September 1889. On 2nd December 1889 the Mayor of Sydney ordered work to commence on the erection of the instrument in the Centennial Hall (Ampt 1987:7).

The Sydney Town Council were determined that the festivities surrounding the opening of their new organ should be an event of the greatest musical significance. With this in mind requests were sent to Sir Saul Samuel, the Agent General, and Dr. Bridge, asking them to submit the names of suitable organists to give the opening recital, and also a series of recitals spanning a three or six month period. Dr. Bridge recommended W. S. Hoyte for the task, but at its meeting on 2nd October 1889, the Council decided that both Best and Hoyte, and any other eminent organists to be invited to submit terms to cover twelve recitals, the passage and other expenses. The time span for these recitals was then reduced to one month. At its meeting on the 6th of December, the Council decided to invite Best to perform the opening recitals, even though his fee was £630 as compared with Hoyte's £550. In spite of the fact that he was unquestionably the greatest organist in the world, the selection of Best created a certain amount of bad feeling, Mansfield (1918:226&227) reporting that one player who had expected obtain the engagement [Hoyte?] thereafter always referred to Best as Mr. *Beast*. Best intended to follow this visit with a series of concerts in America. Clarence Eddy wrote in the *American Musician* that Best, if engaged by the Sydney authorities, had '...promised to return via the United States, and give some concerts there. In this event I can assure American music lovers of a very rare treat, as Mr. Best is a virtuoso of the highest rank...' (reprinted in MO, 1st January 1890:178).



Sincerely,
W. Stevenson Hoyte

123. William Stevenson Hoyte
[Photograph: Royal College of Music]



124. The original design by Arthur G. Hill of the organ-case for Sydney Town Hall
 [British Organ Archive]

Musical Opinion of 1st June 1890 (vol.xiii, No.153:373) reported Best's arrival in Australia:

.....the worthy organist [Best] arrived by the "Austral". He visited the Town Hall, where he was cordially welcomed by the mayor. Mr. Best was introduced to various aldermen, &c., and spent some time in conversation with them and certain members of the organ committee, together with other musicians of the city. He was most favourably impressed with the appearance of the centennial Hall, which he considers well suited for such performances as organ recitals. It appeared from the conversation that Mr. Best fully recognised his obligations to the city of Sydney, and expressed himself as having no intention of performing anywhere prior to the formal opening of the organ. The president and the members of the Athanaeum Club invited Mr. Best to accept honorary membership in the club during his stay in Sydney.....

The organ was originally to have been opened in November 1889, but this became impossible, and Messrs. Hill needed to have an extension from the City Council in order to complete the instrument. A new date in July 1890 was proposed. As Sir Charles Hallé wrote in his diary on 21st June, '...the large hall, in which the huge organ is being erected, for the completion of which Mr. Best is waiting here...'. As *Musical Opinion* later reported (Vol.xiii, No.156, 1st September 1890:490) '...Mr. Best was brought to Sydney a month or two before he was wanted...'.

There was a further delay, the cause of which was recorded by Sir Charles Hallé, in his diary entry for 16th July:

.....While at breakfast I heard that poor Mr. Best has had a bad fall down a high staircase (after a dinner given to Mr. Toole): has hurt his side very badly, and has already been a fortnight in hospital. The opening of the organ and the Centennial Hall is therefore postponed, and not likely to take place before the second week of August.....

The accident had happened on the 3rd of July. Whilst descending a flight of stairs at the French Club on Wynyard Square, Best had slipped and fallen. He was reported to have been severely shaken but otherwise uninjured, however, as the *Sydney Herald* of 25th July reported, the accident had turned out to be '...more serious than was at first anticipated...', but that Best was '...fast progressing towards recovery and hopes to be able to perform in about a week's time...'. By the end of the month he had recovered sufficiently to be able to spend some time at the organ. A new date, the 9th August, was finally arranged for the opening



Photo Freeman, Sydney.

THE LATE MR. W. T. BEST.

125. W. T. Best at the time of his visit to Australia.

[National Portrait Gallery]

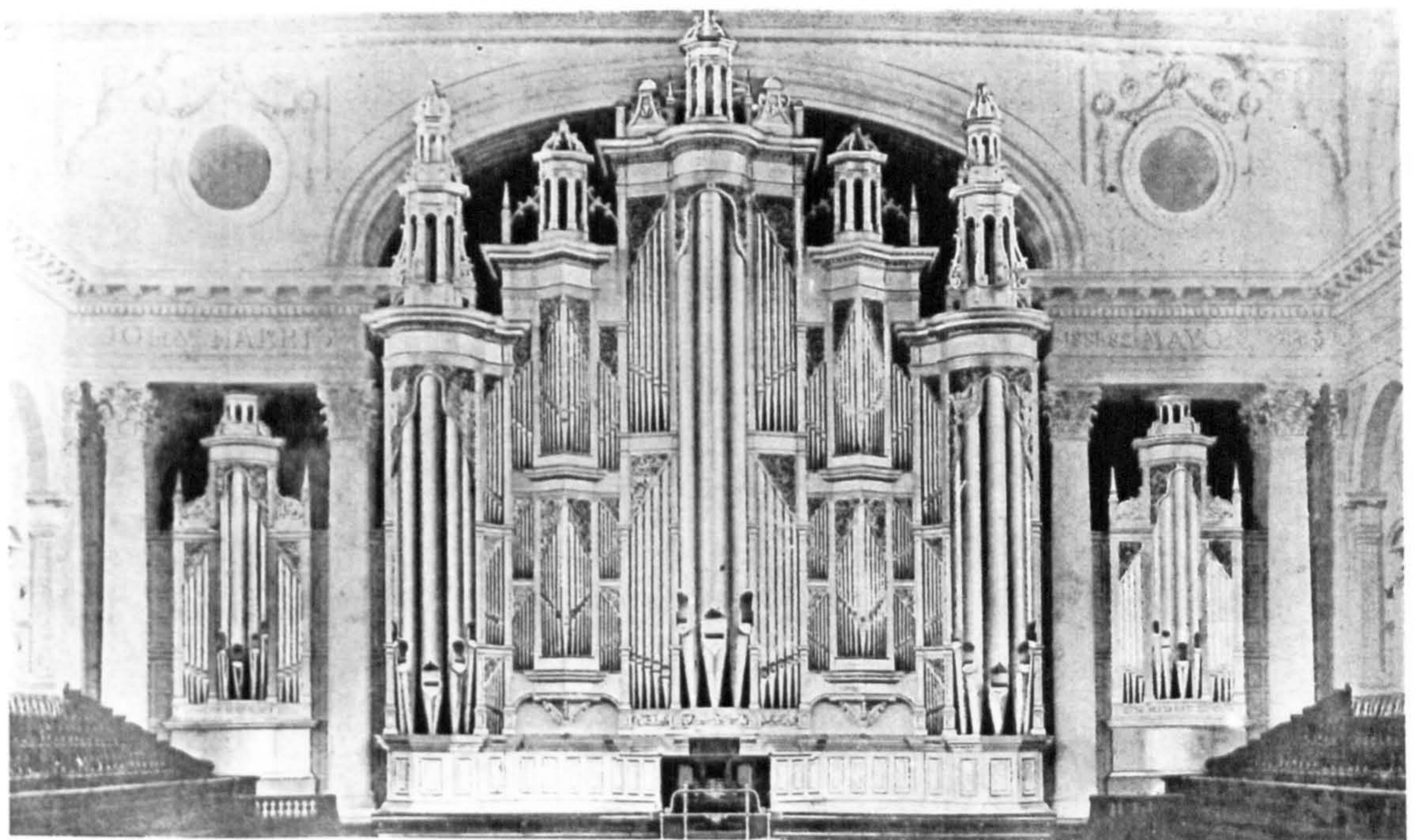
recital. As the *Sydney Herald* of 21st July had remarked, '...the organ is built, tuned, and decorated, and only awaits the touch of a master's hand to give forth music...'

The organ, with its 126 speaking-stops, could claim to be the largest in the world²⁰ – Best described it as the 'Megatherium in Kangaroo Land'. For a week before the concert, the hall was completely closed so that Best could enjoy undisturbed practice. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 9th August 1890, amongst many articles devoted to the great event about to take place, printed the following, which shows that the importance of a civic hall and the organ it contained as an embodiment of civic pride and as a centre for music making was also recognised in the British Colonies:

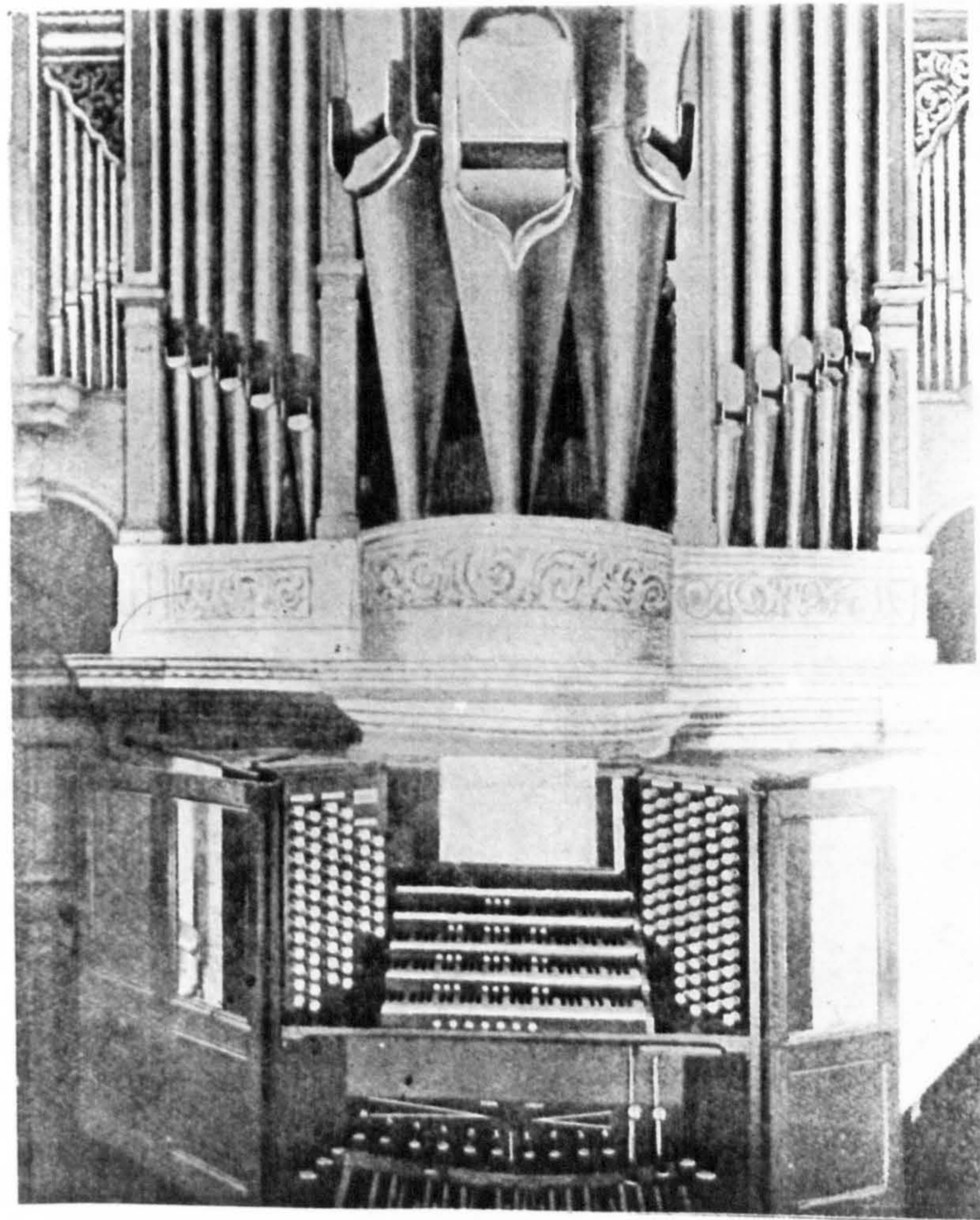
.....We build town halls and open great organs in them, because we recognise the necessity of having a place and means to celebrate public occasions, and to be used as the scenes and instruments of popular festivities.....It is one of the best signs of our times to find these town halls in the centres not only of the municipal, but in an ever growing degree, of the artistic life of the people.....The organ is the real "King of Instruments", and the history of its development is the history of music, which is the flower and crown of all the arts.....

A hour before the start of the concert, most of the hall's 4,000 seats were occupied. At three-o'clock, the Mayor, accompanied by Best, entered the hall. The Mayor simply declared, '..."My duty is a simple one. It is to introduce to you our friend Mr. W. T. Best, a gentleman who occupies the highest position in the ranks of organists in England. He will, I am sure, offer you the treat you expect in listening to this king of instruments, the Centennial Hall Organ. I introduce Mr. Best to you"...' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th August 1890). After the *National Anthem*, Best played music by Bach, S. S. Wesley, Best, Rossini, Mendelssohn and Guilmant [see Appendix 3], the *Sydney Morning Herald* (11th August 1890) declaring that '...With Mr. Best's advent, a new era in the musical advancement in the colony has been entered into...'

Best was under contract to perform a total of twelve recitals, and he gave the remaining eleven over a period of twenty-three days. The audiences at these



126. *The Organ in the Centennial Hall, Sydney.*



127. *The Console.*

concerts were numbered in thousands, only the first being comparatively poorly attended, because the revised admission prices had not yet been widely advertised. Best's health was giving cause for concern during this time. The recital to be given on the 25th of August had to be postponed for a day because he was suffering from a throat and lung disorder, his medical advisor having warned him against exposure to the night air (Ampt 1897:19). The last recital also had to be postponed for twenty-four hours because Best had broken a blood vessel and was therefore unable to play at the time advertised. In spite of the heat, Best required a fire in his dressing room, and because of his aversion to draughts, a glass case had to be built round the organ bench (Hadden:484). As he later told William Faulkes, the climate had played "the ve-ry dev-vil" with him (Harrison nd:17).

The recital given on Saturday 30th August (the tenth) , consisting of music by Rossini, Molique, Handel, Lemmens, Best and Meyerbeer [see Appendix 3], was an event unparalleled in the history of Sydney. Not only were people standing in the hall itself, but were in the corridors and vestibule, and more than 2,000 were turned away (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1st September 1890). The size of the actual audience was conservatively estimated at at least 7,000 persons. The atmosphere of the occasion had a great effect on the performer. The *Sydney Morning Herald* maintaining that '...at no time during his visit to Sydney has Mr. Best played with such verve and heartiness...', while '...great enthusiasm prevailed throughout the performance...'. This concert must have represented the pinnacle of Best's career.

After the fourth recital, door takings had exceeded all of Best's expenses, so the City Council, at its meeting two days after the final concert, agreed to present him with an additional £200, to express their '...appreciation of the artistic and efficient manner in which the duties have been carried out; also having regard to the difficulties that gentleman [Best] has had to contend with...' (Sydney City Council Files 7/20).

Best was impressed with the high degree of musical culture he found in Australia, which far exceeded '...what any European have any idea of existing in this far distant part of the world...' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th August 1890).

The authorities in Sydney were anxious to appoint a suitable organist for their Hall, the *Sydney Morning Herald* devoting a leader to the subject:

.....Mr. Best, who knows what treatment organs like our should receive, said on one recent occasion that the instrument we possess is worthy of the finest interpreter of the art of organ playing, and there can be no doubt that he is right. Is there any reason why we should not try to obtain such a man?.....Without wishing, however, to disparage local talent, it must be said that, if we want a great organist to play the great organ - that is to say, a man who is great by experience and reputation - we must go to Europe, which amounts to saying we must look for him in England.....On an informal occasion, the mayor said that it would be false economy to be content with an organist unworthy of the instrument, and that if we want a competent man we must be prepared to pay fully £500 or £600 per annum. He also spoke of the anxiety of the aldermen to obtain the services of the most competent performer, and the willingness of the citizens to pay Mr. Best £1,000 a year, if he would cast his lot with them. There can be little doubt that the citizens take a liberal view of this matter, and would support the council in offering a large salary to Mr. Best or any other organist of high rank..... (reprinted in *Musical Opinion* Vol.xiv, No.158, 1st November 1890:57)

Livesey (1926:258) states that the Sydney authorities actually offered the post to Best, which was possible, and any refusal on the part of Best was probably prompted by his state of health. Because of this, as *Musical Opinion* (Vol.xiv, No.159, 1st December 1890:85) reported, '...Mr. Best's proposed professional tour through the United States.....has been abandoned...' and '...he is expected home immediately...'

CHAPTER 13

THE HANDEL FESTIVALS

*.....Mr. W. T. Best, whose devotion to Handelian study and executive mastery
of the composer's works is world-famous.....*

(Musical Opinion Vol.viii, No.93, 1st June 1885:433)

The 'Commemoration of Handel', held in Westminster Abbey in 1784, was in honour of the centenary of the composer's birth. In 1859, a three-day festival was held in the Crystal Palace (which had been re-erected at Sydenham), to mark the centenary of his death. Since his death, Handel's music had occupied a special place in the affections of the British, and his ultimate popularity rested on the acceptance of his oratorios, especially *Messiah*, by amateur singers. In fact this oratorio was regarded as a bulwark of English Protestant belief (Nettel 1951:62).¹ Handel's music reached all but the lowest classes of society through the great music festivals in the provincial cathedrals, Westminster Abbey, the Charity Festivals, and the 'Concert of Antient Music'. These works crossed any religious divide in Victorian England, the Non-conformists being as strong in their support as the Anglicans. By the mid-19th century, performances of Handel's works, in particular *Messiah*, were '...elevated to a rite...a kind of nationalistic substitute for religious experience...' (Mellers 1946:99), evoking strong patriotic feeling. Handel's music thus represented an important element in the culture of Victorian England.

After 1859, a Handel Festival was held every three years at the Crystal Palace. Choral music was to dominate at these Triennial Festivals, with the chorus made up of 'amateurs' drawn from '...the Sacred Harmonic Society, the Cathedral Choir Establishments, and the leading Provincial Choral Societies...' (1871 'Selection Day' Book (Novello)). The forces used at these Festivals were enormous, the 1871 'Selection Day' Book (Novello) boasting that '...the chorus and orchestra will number upwards of four thousand performers...'. In spite of the emphasis on choral singing, Handel's orchestral works were also performed, and from 1871 until 1891, W. T. Best was the solo organist, playing one of the organ concertos with the orchestra. These concertos had featured regularly in Best's concert programmes from the outset of his career in the late 1840's.² In 1858 he published six of the concertos (Op.4, Nos 1 - 6) for organ solo (Novello), envisaging performance on a large organ with pedals. His provision of a pedal part and the filling out of the texture from the '...mere treble and bass..' of the original, Best regarded as an opportunity '...for the exercise of musical ability in consolidating and filling up the significant outlines given by Handel into an artistic whole, - a task which, perhaps demands the highest powers of the organist...' (Best 1858:Introduction). It is likely that he based these arrangements on the edition published by Walsh, and each concerto was supplied with a cadenza of his own

composition. Best justified the arranging these concertos by declaring that they '...ought not to be allowed to fall into disuse from any hindrances presented by their original form to an effective performance upon our modern instruments...' (Best 1858:Introduction). Best, in the same passage, agreed with Berlioz's view, as expressed in the *Traité d'Instrumentation et d'Orchestration Moderne*, '...adverse to the Combination of an Organ with Orchestra...', and used this as a further point to support his case for arrangement for organ alone.

By the time of his first appearance at the Handel Festivals, in 1871, Best had obviously modified this view. He played the Concerto in G minor (op.4, No.1) with the orchestra, and his manuscript copy of the organ part is still in existence (Liverpool City Library Dq 1466). Best also provided a pianoforte arrangement of the work (as he did for some of the concertos he played at many of the subsequent Festivals) which was published, along with the other music to be performed on 'Selection Day', by Novello. He subsequently edited several of the concertos played at these Festivals for publication by Augener. The *Musical Standard* of 1st July 1871 (Vol.i, No.361:97&98) reported on Best's first Festival appearance:

.....The second part of the programme consisted of a miscellaneous selection of choruses and airs from Handel's oratorios and operas, preceded by his No.1 Organ Concerto. Although, perhaps, a better choice might have been made than this concerto, still we are glad to find that recognition has at last been accorded to one of Handel's organ pieces. It is somewhat singular to observe that, despite all the improvements which have been made both in the variety and also in the construction of that instrument, his concertos still remain almost if not entirely unique; they offer, in fact, remarkable evidence of this thorough appreciation of what the genius of the organ required. To say that Mr. Best's playing of this amply exhibited his perfect execution, is only repeating what everybody knows; but on the whole we confess to being somewhat disappointed; he made little use of solo stops, and, owing to his want of constant acquaintance with the instrument, we more than once heard the additional stops brought on by the composition pedals before his hands had been lifted from the keys; he introduced the elaborate un-Handelian cadenza published some years ago^[3] in his three-line arrangement, wisely omitting on Wednesday the blurred, scrambling runs played at the end of it on the Friday previous. Mr. Best was loudly applauded for his performance.....

At the Festival in 1874, the Concerto in F (Op.4, No.4) was performed, and C. W. Pearce (1927:81) recalled Best's '...masterly blending of organ with orchestra...', and, especially in the slow movement of this concerto, '...the peculiarly beautiful alternations of organ and orchestral tone...'

CRYSTAL PALACE.
FOURTH TRIENNIAL HANDEL FESTIVAL,
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21st, 1871.

PROGRAMME.

PART I.

THE DETTINGEN TE DEUM	Page 3
Composed in the year 1747, to celebrate the Conclusion of Peace. The Solos by Mr. SANTLEY.	

PART II.

CONCERTO for the ORGAN and ORCHESTRA, No. 1. Mr. W. T. BEST.	71
Air Signor AGNESI	Sorge infausta Orlando ... 82
Recitative	} Mr. SIMS REEVES { Deeper and deeper still
Air ... ..		Waft her, Angels ... .. Jephthah ... 86
Recitative	} Madlle. TITIENS { Ye sacred priests
Air ... ..		Farewell, ye limpid springs ... ..
Chorus	Ye sons of Israel Joshua ... 94
Air	Madame TREBELLI-BETTINI Verdi prati Alcina ... 103
Recitative	} Mr. VERNON RIGBY { 'Tis well, my friends
Air ... ..		Call forth thy powers ... .. Judas Maccabæus 106
Air	Mr. SANTLEY Nasce al bosco Ezio ... 110
Air	Madlle. TITIENS Oft on a plat
Recitative	} Mr. CUMMINGS { If I give thee honour due
Air ... ..		Let me wander ... .. L'Allegro ed } 114
Chorus	And young and old
Recitative	} Mr. SIMS REEVES { Thanks to my brethren
Air ... ..		How vain is man ... .. Judas Maccabæus 122
Air	Madame SINICO O had I Jubal's lyre Joshua ... 127
Chorus with Solo	Madame TREBELLI-BETTINI The mighty power Athalia ... 131

PART III.

A SELECTION FROM THE ORATORIO OF "SOLOMON."

OVERTURE	145
Double Chorus	Your harps and cymbals sound ... 148
Air	Madame PATEY What though I trace ... 162
Air	Madame SINICO With thee th' unshelter'd moor ... 164
Chorus	May no rash intruder ... 166
Double Chorus	From the censer ... 172
Recitative	Madame PATEY Sweep, sweep the string ... 189
Solo and Chorus	Madame PATEY Music, spread thy voice around ... 189
Solo and Double Chorus	Madame PATEY Now a different measure try ... 195
Recitative	Madame PATEY Then at once from rage remove ... 202
Chorus	Draw the tear from hopeless love ... 202
Recitative	Madame PATEY Next the tortured soul release ... 205
Air and Chorus	Madame PATEY Thus rolling surges rise ... 205
Recitative	} Mr. CUMMINGS { Thrice happy king ... 210
Air ... ..		Golden columns ... 211
Double Chorus	Praise the Lord ... 216

THE CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA WILL NUMBER UPWARDS OF
FOUR THOUSAND SELECTED PERFORMERS.

The Singers will be chosen principally from the Sacred Harmonic Society, the Cathedral Choir Establishments, and the leading Provincial Choral Societies.

THE ENTIRE MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

The Sacred Harmonic Society.

ORGANIST, MR. JAMES COWARD.

Conductor - - - SIR MICHAEL COSTA.

128. Programme for the 'Selection Day' Concert of the 1871 Handel Festival.

[Novello]

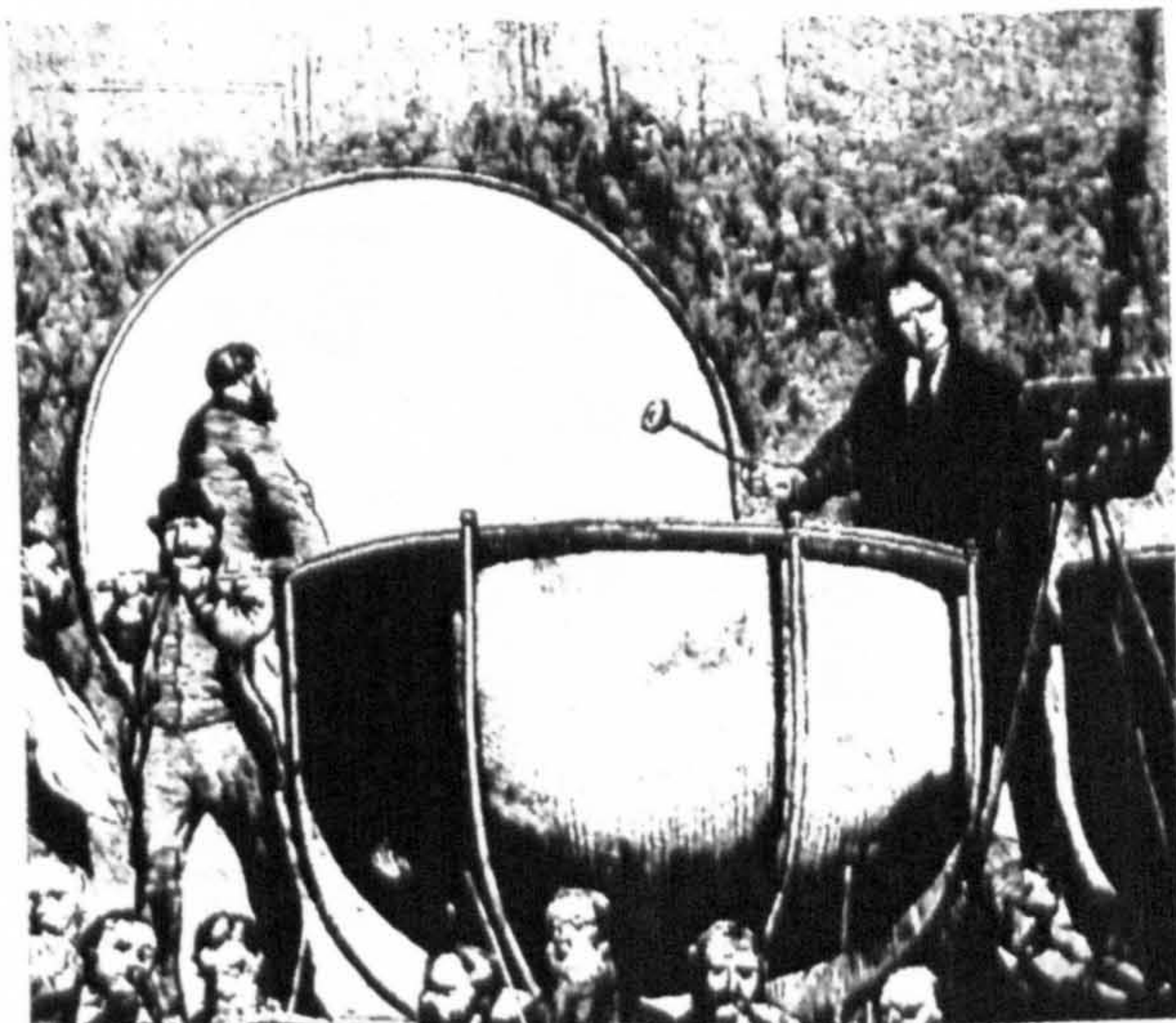
In 1877 Best played the Concerto in B flat (Op.4, No.2), which was noted by George Bernard Shaw, and, at the Eighth Triennial Festival in 1883, he again played the G minor Concerto (Op.4, No.1). On this occasion *Musical Opinion* (Vol.vi, No.70, 1st July 1883:428) thought that '...Mr. Best's performance of the Organ Concerto...deserves praise as a remarkable display of virtuosity rather than as a faithful rendering of the work...'. This was the famous occasion on which Best used a glockenspiel stop⁴ '...in a particularly bell-like passage...' in the work (MO, Vol.viii, No.85, 1st October 1884:29), Statham (1909:228) suggesting that Handel's use of a carillon in 'Welcome mighty King' in *Saul* was the inspiration for this.

It was at this Festival that Augustus Manns, the conductor of the Crystal Palace Concerts, took over from Sir Michael Costa, as musical director. Of the two Best would appear to have preferred Costa, because the precision of his beat '...enabled the soloist to make his calculations with confidence...' (Levien 1942:33), whereas Mann's less decisive beat made '...any question of anticipation...very difficult...' (Harrison nd:4). This obviously led to problems of ensemble between the organ and the orchestra:

.....Great amusement was caused at these functions [the Handel Festivals] by the *sang froid* manner in which he [Best] would insist upon, and doggedly keep to, his own *tempi*.....regardless of the exertions of the conductor in trying to keep the band and organ together"..... (Mansfield 1918:223)

For the Handel Bi-Centenary Festival, held in 1885, Best chose to perform the Concerto in B flat (Op.7, No.3), '...this concerto being produced with orchestral accompaniment for the first time since Handel's death...' (MO, Vo.viii, No.92, 1st May 1885:394). The performance received the following notice in *Musical Opinion* of 1st August 1885:

.....Handel's organ concertos are seldom heard in the present day except at these festivals. That which was selected on the present occasion by Mr. Best was probably one of the least known - the third of the second set. The opening movement of this fine work contains more orchestral contrasts of colour than many of the concertos. At the end of the first 'allegro' is an indication of an 'ad libitum' movement for the organ. It is well known that it was Handel's custom to leave a good deal of the solo part of his concertos to improvisation. Mr. Best.....who took the organ in this work, showed excellent taste and judgement by introducing here a movement from another concerto, instead of trusting entirely to his own invention. In this he manifested the spirit of a true artist, while



130. Sketches made at the Handel Festival of 1874, and published in 'The Graphic' of 27th June 1874. The four sketches are headed:

'Effects of the Hailstone Chorus'

'A Pair of Enthusiasts'

'A Solo' [the conductor is Sir Michael Costa]

'Tuning up the big kettledrum'

Was performed at the Grand Bi-Centenary Festival, Crystal Palace, 1885

Fifth
Organ Concerto

with Orchestral Accompaniment



Augener & Co. Edition.
Op. 709.
Complete

SEPARATELY
Op. 709. Organ Solo
Op. 709. Orchestral Part

F. F. Augener.

Edited and Arranged by

A. T. Best.

Augener & Co. London.

131. Title-page of the Concerto in B flat (Op.7, No.3), which Best played at the Bi-centenary Festival of 1885 [Augener].

the connecting passages which he added to lead up to the following fugue were in admirable keeping with their surroundings. The fine fugue and the entire concerto was well worthy of revival.....It would be unjust not also to mention Mr. Best's fine playing of the organ concerto..... (MO, Vol.viii, No.95:538)

It was at this Festival that the young Henry J. Wood (1869–1944)(1938:35) first heard his '...ideal of a great organist...'. In later years Wood was to produce his own Wagnerian arrangement of this self-same concerto.

After his performance of the B flat Concerto (Op.7, No.1) in 1888, Best '...was loudly applauded – as indeed, he deserved to be...' (MT, 1st July 1888:409). A mistake in the programme for the 'Selection Day' concert of this Festival resulted in Best writing a letter to *The Times* which displayed his wide knowledge of Handel's compositions.⁵

The Festival of 1891 was the last in which Best took part. He played the Concerto in F (Op.4, No.4) '...brilliantly...' at the public rehearsal on Friday 19th June (MT 1st July 1891:406), but the performance on 'Selection Day' did not go quite so well, the *Musical Times* (1st July 1891:406) reporting that '...the solo instrument and orchestra were at times not exactly together...', which *Musical Opinion* (Vol.xiv, No.167, 1st August 1891:11) attributed to a '...want of understanding between Mr. Best and Mr. Manns...'. It is likely that this was an example of the way in which Best '...would insist upon, and doggedly keep to, his own *tempi*...regardless of the exertions of the conductor in trying to keep band and organ together...' (Mansfield 1918:223). It would seem that Best set out deliberately to try to catch out Manns:

.....At the Handel Festivals he [Best] led poor old Manns a pretty dance by his erratic *tempi* in Handel's organ concertos. When Manns was beating quickly, Best would slacken the time and *vice versa*..... (Hadden:484)

In the second part of the same concert Best's arrangement of the Minuet from *Berenice* for string orchestra was performed. Shaw, writing in *The World* of 1st July 1891, praised Best for '...giving the seventy-two cellos a rare opportunity...', and *Musical Opinion* (Vol.xiv, No.167, 1st August 1891:410&411) thought that their singing tone was '...singularly fine...'.⁵

MENUET

de l'Opéra „BERENICE“ de G.F. HÄNDEL.

Arrangé par W. T. BEST.

(Tutti) Andante con moto. $\text{♩} = 92.$

VIOLINO I.
VIOLINO II.
VIOLA.
VIOLONCELLO.
CONTRABASSO.

mf > mf > mf > mf > mf

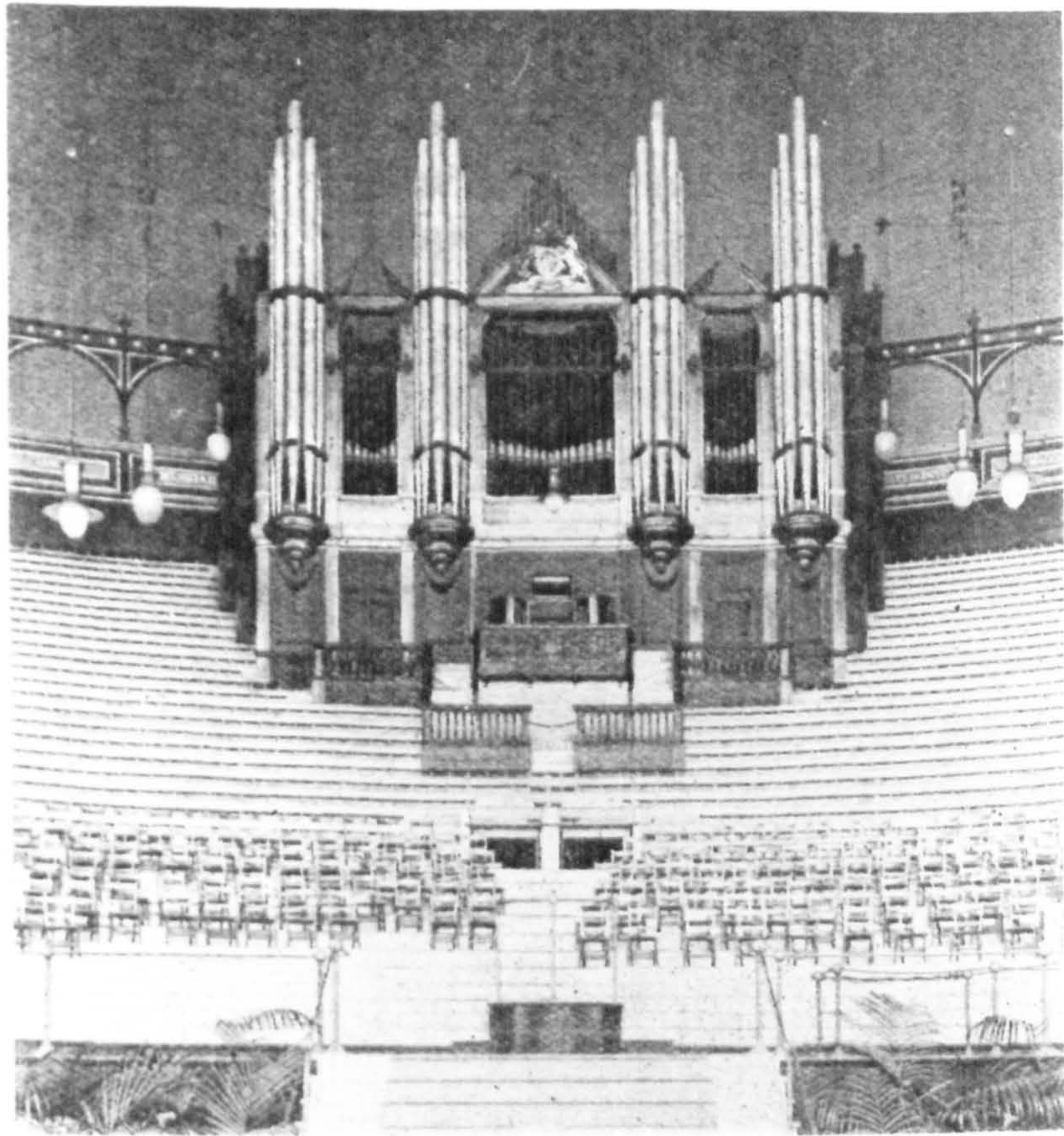
cresc. cresc. sf cresc. cresc. cresc.

pizz. dim. pizz. p dim. pizz. p

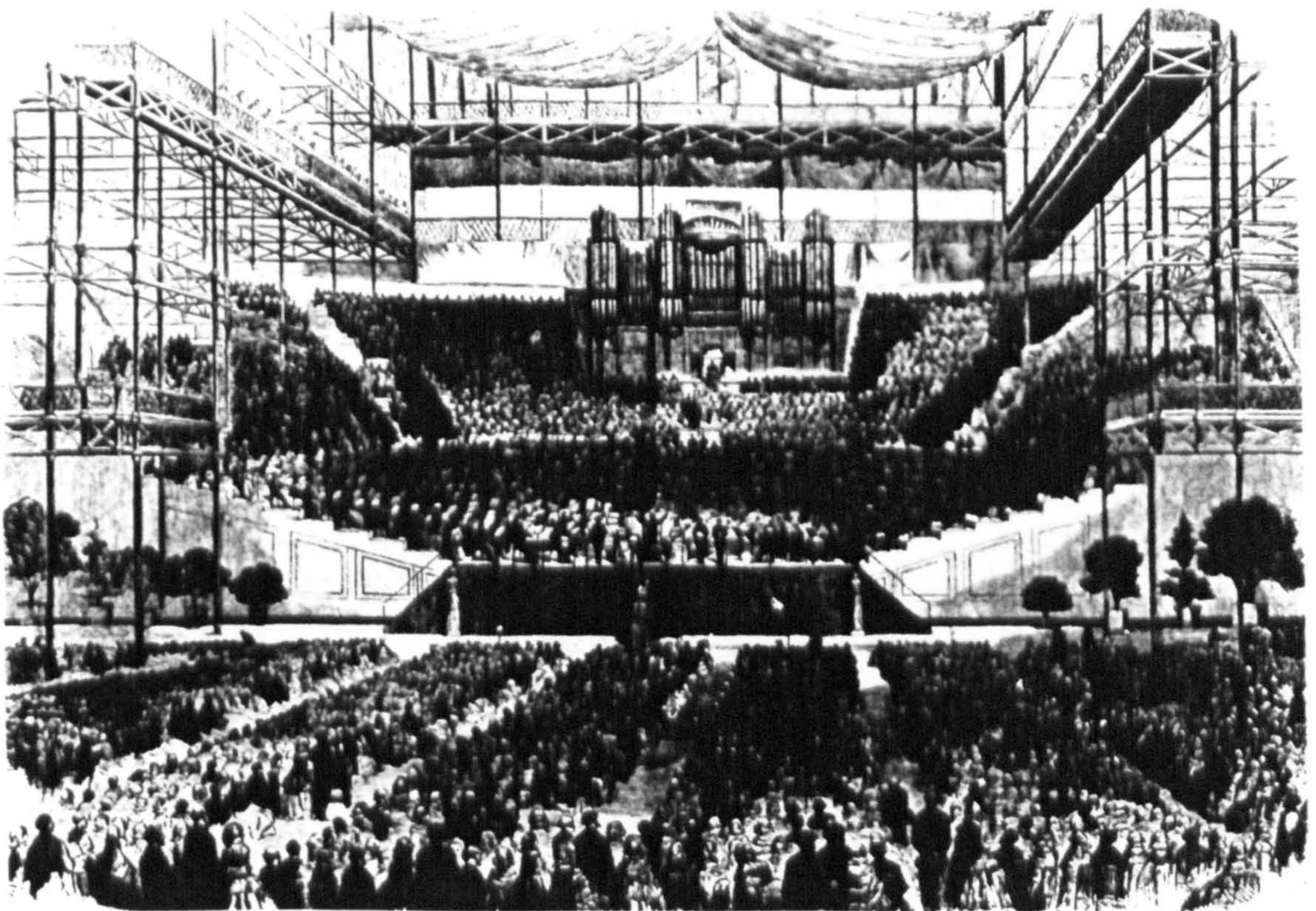
dim. pizz. p

Stich u. Druck von H. SCHOTT'S SÖHNE in Mainz. 21733

132. The opening of Best's arrangement for string orchestra of the Minuet from Handel's 'Berenice' which was performed at the 1891 Festival [Schott].



133. *The organ in the Crystal Palace, built by Gray & Davison for the Handel Festivals.*



134. *A Handel Festival Concert at the Crystal Palace.*

Throughout his career Best championed the music of Handel, and frequently played his concertos, either as solo pieces, or with orchestra at the Handel Festivals. He also edited and arranged a vast amount of Handel's output, including the oratorios, operas, orchestral and instrumental music [see *Catalogue of Compositions, Editions and Transcriptions - Part 3*]. Later generations may be critical of the manner in which Best edited and arranged the music. Sir Donald Tovey (1936/1978:200) could write dismissively that '...Handel is himself to blame if a large portion of what purports to be his organ music is really the composition of the late W. T. Best...' and look forward to '...the de-Bestification of the text...'. This is to miss the point - each generation performs the music of the past in a manner which is inherent to the needs of that generation. A truly creative musician '...takes the great work of the past and remakes it constantly, thus renewing the act of creation throughout the generations...' (Small 1977:32).

Handel's music was central to the Victorian musical culture. His music was performed at all important occasions, such as the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851, and St George's Hall, Liverpool in 1854. The Triennial Handel Festivals at the Crystal Palace represented the homage of the age to their musical 'hero' in the 'temple' which in itself was an embodiment of the 'spirit of the age'. Best, who approached the performance of the organ concertos from the vantage point of a wide knowledge of the composer's entire output, contributed to this national 'worship', and also ensured that the music became widely known and firmly established in the repertoire.



133. *Sir August Manns and the Handel Festival.*
[*'Musical Opinion'*, 1st August 1894:695]

CHAPTER 14

A NATION OF CHOIRSINGERS

.....The influx of workers during the nineteenth century to the new industrial towns from the old rural areas meant that they entered the century a nation of folksingers but their descendants emerged from it a nation of choirsingers.....

(Nettel 1944:1)

The programme of the Fourth Triennial Handel Festival, held in 1871, boasted that the '...Singers will be chosen principally from the Sacred Harmonic Society, the Cathedral Choir Establishments, and the leading Provincial Choral Societies...' (Selection Day Book 1871). The 19th century saw an unprecedented increase in the popularity of choral singing. England has a great choral tradition stretching back across the centuries, which, as Vaughan Williams (1953/1963:182) wrote, '...Tallis passed on to Byrd, Byrd to Gibbons, Gibbons to Purcell, Purcell to Battishill and Greene, and they in their turn through the Wesleys to Parry...'. This was the tradition fostered through the cathedrals, which, however, by the end of the 18th century had sunk to a low ebb.¹ Reform was brought about during the 19th century by such figures as Maria Hackett, Samuel Sebastian Wesley and Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley.

During the 18th century choralism of a different style was developing, with origins which can be traced back, in part, to charitable enterprise. For example, the Three Choirs Festival, centred on the three cathedral cities of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester, was started in 1729, with the object of raising money for the support of the widows and orphans of clergymen in the West of England. This Festival had a wide impact on music, and drew its choral singers from further afield than those three West Country Shires, mention being made of '...the celebrated female chorus singers...from the North of England...' (Lysons 1895:49). Among these was a soprano, Sarah Harrop, who later married Joah Bate, who was the conductor of the Handel Commemoration of 1784, held in Westminster Abbey (Mackerness 1966:113). This event, more than any other, set the pattern for large-scale choral performances in 19th century England. Bate was a native of Halifax, a thriving industrial centre, where, as Charles Dibdin noted (1788, Letters XLVIII:196) there was a great enthusiasm for the choral music of Handel, '...more than one man in HALIFAX can take any part in chorusses [sic] of the *Messiah*, and go regularly through the whole oratorio by heart...', adding that it was astonishing how '...the common people join together throughout the greater part of YORKSHIRE and LANCASHIRE, in every species of choral music...'.

The Birmingham Festival, begun in 1768, raised money for the local hospital, and provided the initial impulse for the building of Birmingham Town Hall

in 1834 and the organ erected in it. The organ, in fact, remained the property of the General Hospital until 1922 (Thistlethwaite 1984:593). Liverpool's Triennial three-day Music Festival, begun two years earlier than Birmingham, provided the impetus for the building of St. George's Hall.

Musical societies could be found in towns like Liverpool, Hull, Leeds and Bristol during the 18th century, Glee and Catch Clubs being especially popular between 1760 and 1860 (Mackerness 1966:114). Many of these societies, such as the Madrigal Society, formed in 1741 and still in existence, were entirely serious in their aims and origin.

The 19th century saw a re-birth in musical education in England. One motive was the reform in church music. In this, the non-conformists, took a lead, as congregational singing was of more importance to their worship than it was to that of the Established Church, as for example, when, in 1841, a conference of Sunday School teachers in Hull appointed John Curwen to investigate the various systems of music-teaching then in use (Nettel 1944:7). The supposed 'moral' influence of music was also an important factor:

.....Music may inspire devotion, fortitude, compassion, benevolence, tranquillity; it may infuse a gentle sorrow that softens without wounding the heart, or a sublime horror that expands and elevates, while it astonishes the imagination; but music has no expression for impiety, cowardice, cruelty, hatred, or discontent. For every essential rule of the art tends to produce pleasing combination of sound; and it is difficult to conceive how, from these, any painful or criminal affections should arise..... (Beattie, *Essays on Poetry and Music* 3rd edn:155, quoted by Turner 1833:30)

These pioneers of musical education concentrated on the teaching of vocal music.

W. C. Smith maintained that the 'Industrial Revolution' '...largely created conditions which compelled the ordinary people...to find their own recreations cheaply amongst themselves – and they therefore endeavoured to make their own music...' (Nettel 1945/6:39). The pioneers of musical education, Hullah, Mainzer

and Curwen held singing classes in the new industrial cities, which proved very popular. There were 1,500 people at the first meeting of the Lancashire and Cheshire Workmen's Singing Classes in Manchester in 1843. Mainzer directed popular singing classes in Paris (1834), London (1841) and many other parts of the country. In Manchester, in 1850, he conducted 2,000 singers drawn from his classes there after only six months, and was hailed by both civic and ecclesiastical leaders (the Mayor and the Bishop of Manchester) as a '...great social reformer and philanthropist...' (Nettel 1951:129). Of crucial to much of this singing was the use of solfeggio as a method of sight-reading.² Some idea of the widespread adoption of this system can be gained from the fact that, in the year following the Great Handel Festival of 1859, John Curwen organised a choral competition for sol-fa singers at the Crystal Palace, very much on the lines of a Welsh Esteddfod (Nettel 1977:9).³

Choral Societies were formed in every town and city, with repertoires which consisted predominantly of the music of Handel, and later Mendelssohn, although, as the century progressed, other composers of the past, such as Bach, Mozart and Haydn, were more frequently performed, as well as works by contemporary writers. The publication of cheap vocal scores by such publishing houses as Novello was crucial to the success of choral movement in general.

19th century English choralism fulfilled a moral, educational and social purpose, and grew out of a reverence for the music of Handel and a liking for grand effects. The concentrations of population, which were a direct result of the 'Industrial Revolution', created conditions which were suitable for the rapid proliferation of this choral movement.

W. T. Best and 19th Century Choralism

Many of the new Town Halls with their splendid concert organs were built, in the first instance, to house festivals of choral singing. It is therefore fitting

that W. T. Best, the greatest of the civic organists at the grandest of these new halls should have had a lifelong connection with the choral movement. He conducted a '...Chorus of One Hundred and Fifty Performers selected from the Members of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society...' in music by Morley, Ford and Mendelssohn at the concert for the Duke of Cambridge, at St. George's Hall in October 1855 (Programme - Liverpool City Library D 6262), and earlier in his career had conducted his own part-songs at concerts of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. After this, his connection with the choral movement was as an organist and editor, rather than as a conductor.

At St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Best often played with the orchestra in performances of oratorio, as, for example, in the 1856-1857 season when he played in Handel's *Joshua* and *Messiah* with the Festival Choral Society.⁴ Before the rebuilding of the organ in 1867, there were serious problems when the organ was used with orchestra. As Best reported to the Liverpool Law Courts Committee in 1866 '...in consequence of the "pitch" of the organ being very much below the standard in use in all orchestras it is almost impossible to combine the instrument with a band...', and continued '...I am told that the "Musical Society" intends performing the Oratorio of "Elijah" with complete Band &c. very soon, but unless the Committee determine to have the organ raised to the orchestral pitch I don't see how the organ can co-operate...' (Minutes 1864-1866, 352 MIN/LAW 1/4:102-104).

There was no such problem when Best accompanied oratorio performances without an orchestra, a branch of the art of which he was an acknowledged master. As the *Musical Herald* (January 1890:291) described it:

.....In an oratorio performance, the smaller societies that cannot afford a band are sure of an excellent substitute in Mr. Best. His published arrangements of oratorios are noted for their fullness and faithful reproduction of orchestral effects.....

Best '...ably supplied the want of an orchestra...' (MT Vol.viii, 1st December 1858:352) in performances of Handel's *Messiah*, and seems to have been particularly adept at reproducing Mozart's additional accompaniments. When he first

accompanied this oratorio, St. George's Hall '...was crowded with musicians from all parts of the country...' (Bryson 1926:1212). At a different performance John Hullah remarked '..."I went to a performance without a band...and heard all the wind-instrument parts perfectly distinct, just as if the band had been there!"...'. Best apparently '...deliberately suppressed a great deal of the most typical organ tone, playing the Pedal part, for instance, with *violone* tone instead of the Open Diapason so as to get as much the effect of string tone as possible where strings were to be represented...' (Statham 1909:226). Watson (1921:234) reported that when Best accompanied *Messiah* '...Not a point was missed in either solo or chorus throughout...'.

For Novello Best produced a vocal score of *Messiah*,⁵ with, as the title-page proclaims, a '...pianoforte accompaniment arranged from the composer's score, and the additional instrumentation of Mozart...'. Mansfield (1918:239) makes the claim that this was the first edition of the oratorio to include Mozart's additional accompaniments arranged for keyboard. The *Liverpool Courier* wrote:

.....Messrs. Novello's recent announcement makes mention of the new edition of Handel's 'Messiah', which has been prepared by W. T. Best, and which, unlike the previous edition by those publishers, will include Mozart's exact instrumentation, which, as all musicians are aware, is always considered inseparable from a performance in its entirety of the oratorio par excellence. It had long been too well known that earlier pianoforte compressments, as well as the orchestra parts, generally accepted as correct, were full of technical blunders and omissions, and it is very satisfactory to know that a work will be placed before the public, every bar of which has been compared with the original MSS.,^[6] and which may be taken as exactly placing before us the conceptions of the glorious Handel as they were recorded by his pen. We imagine that this production will prove to be one of the most remarkable of our time..... (quoted in the *Musical Standard*, Vol.xiii, No.323, 8th October 1870:160)

Best also produced similar vocal scores, with the orchestral accompaniment arranged for keyboard, of Handel's *Jubilate* (composed for the Peace of Utrecht in 1713) and Mozart's *Requiem Mass* (K626), all of which were published by Novello.⁷

The *Musical Times* of 1st November 1858 (Vol.viii:339&340) reported that at a recent performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, '...the accompaniments were

NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

HANDEL'S

SACRED ORATORIO

THE MESSIAH

(COMPOSED IN THE YEAR 1741)

IN VOCAL SCORE

EDITED

WITH PIANOFORTE ACCOMPANIMENT
ARRANGED FROM THE COMPOSER'S SCORE, AND THE
ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTATION OF MOZART

BY

W. T. BEST.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.

Paper boards, 2s. 6d.; cloth, gilt, 4s.

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED
AND
NOVELLO, EWER AND CO., NEW YORK.

136. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's 'Messiah' [Novello].

admirably played on the organ by Mr. Best: his performance was greatly admired...'. Although Best facetiously referred to this work as '...Mendelssohn in his melodrama 'Elijah' or the Fiery Cab-horse...' (Bryson 1926:1212), he took great care over the preparation of the accompaniment for organ solo. He remarked to Statham (1909:225&226) that '..."Getting up those accompaniments was the hardest day's work I ever had in my life"...''. Best never published his organ arrangement of the orchestral part of *Elijah*, but his copy of the vocal score, marked up for performance on the organ, was presented to Liverpool City Library (Dq 1154), but is now (1980) missing. Some idea of the care that Best took in this branch of his work can be gained from the following account by Bryson (1926:1212), of his preparation of Beethoven's *Mass in C*, from Novello's octavo edition:

.....He [Best] obtained two copies, pasted the pages, four on a larger sheet of paper and had these sheets bound into a book about fourteen by twenty inches, thus solving the difficulty of continually having to turn over. He then went over the whole work with the orchestral score, marking the orchestration in red throughout, and adding many notes which the Novello arrangement had omitted. A triumph of neatness and beautiful work - and all for his own use for one occasion.....'

In spite of being involved in the production of three published vocal scores, Best held the view, expressed in the *Musical Herald* (January 1890:293), that:

.....the use of "octavo scores" tends to the destruction of choral efficiency; the singers neglect to count time, and are not ready for the attack at their leads, but, instead, are watching the other parts, or whispering to their neighbours. A double bass player would laugh if he found the violin part printed above his part, and the same principle should apply to the singers; give them their own voice parts, as in the Leeds Festival chorus, and they will attend to their work; moreover, the cost of the music, owing to the fewer pages, would be lessened to each singer.....

Best was appointed organist to the Liverpool Musical Society (a choral society conducted by James Sanders) in 1868 (MS, 15th May 1897:310), but of greater importance, was his re-appointment as organist of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, in 1872.⁸

⑥

Handwritten musical score for organ part, consisting of ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a bass clef. The third staff is marked with a 6. The fourth staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "(no organ)". The fifth staff is marked with a 6. The sixth staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "Orch^a". The seventh staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "mf". The eighth staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "mf". The ninth staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "mf". The tenth staff is marked with a 6 and contains the instruction "mf". The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata.

v. Chorus, "He gave them hailstones"
from Org. arr., as before.

137. Part of Best's manuscript organ part for Handel's 'Israel in Egypt'.
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION .

THE
REQUIEM MASS

IN VOCAL SCORE

COMPOSED BY

W. A. MOZART.

EDITED, AND THE PIANOFORTE ACCOMPANIMENT ARRANGED, BY
W. T. BEST.

6s 0d

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED.
MADE IN ENGLAND

138. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Mozart's 'Requiem Mass' [Novello].

The Liverpool Philharmonic Society

During the 1830's a group of amateurs had met together, under the direction of William Sudlow, to perform choral music in St. Martin's Church. Sudlow seems to have been the driving force behind the formation of the Philharmonic Society in 1840, with the purpose of '...promoting the Science and Practice of Music...'. From the earliest days the Society had its own orchestra, made up of local amateurs as well as professionals. In addition there were 'Practical Members' who formed the basis of the chorus, and who later constituted themselves as an 'Auxiliary Society' with elaborate rules and rigid discipline. The first concert of the Philharmonic Society was held on 12th March 1840 (Holland 1965:15).

THE FIRST
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE
OF THE
LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY,
WILL TAKE PLACE AT
MR. LASSELL'S SALOON, GREAT RICHMOND-STREET,
On THURSDAY, the 12th of MARCH, 1840.

Conductor..... Mr. JOHN RUSSELL.
Leader..... Mr. H. F. ALDRIDGE, Jun.
Organist..... Mr. WM. SUDLOW.

PROGRAMME.

PART I.

OVERTURE.....(First time in Liverpool.)*Kallivola.*
GLEE..... "Chough and Crow."*Bishop.*
Solo parts by Miss HAMMOND, Miss ALDRIDGE and Mr. WEARING.
MADRIGAL..... "Fire! Fire!"*Thomas Morley, 1594.*
ROUND..... "The Sun has been long on Old Mont Blanc."*Bishop.*
Miss HAMMOND, Miss ALDRIDGE and Miss M. SWAIN.
"MUSIC IN MACBETH."*M. Locke.*
Solo parts, Misses SWAIN and HAMMOND, and Messrs. DODD and SUTTON.
FINALE CHORUS "Bright Orb."*Bishop.*
Solo parts, Miss HAMMOND, Miss M. SWAIN and Mr. DODD.

139. Programme of the first concert by the Liverpool Philharmonic Society.

As can be seen from the above programme, the first concerts were given at the premises of Mr. Lassell, a dancing master, in Richmond Street. In 1843, the Society made use of the hall of the newly built Collegiate Institution in Shaw Street. However, in 1849, the Society was able to move to its own premises, the Philharmonic Hall.⁹ In 1846, W. T. Best's name had appeared as organist, jointly with that of William Sudlow, on concert programmes of the Society. In 1848 he was officially appointed Organist of the Society, and took part in the concerts which marked the opening of the new hall. Best resigned this position when he moved to London in 1851.¹⁰

The years of 1871 and 1872 saw Best consolidate his position as the foremost organist in the country and a musician of great importance. He had played at the opening of the Royal Albert Hall in London, given the inaugural organ recitals there and appointed as organist of the hall. He had become the solo organist at the Handel Festivals held in the Crystal Palace, and been elected a member of the Philharmonic Society of London. His return to the post of organist to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society was as a musician of national and international standing. This was reflected in his manner on the concert platform. Whereas it had been the custom for the organist to enter the hall by a door alongside the organ, Best '...insisted on coming on to the platform along with the vocal principals...' (*Liverpool Post and Mercury* 13th August 1926).

Best played under the direction of the following permanent conductors – Sir Julius Benedict, Max Bruch and Sir Charles Hallé, and also under guest conductors, who were generally composers conducting their own works. Among these were Arthur Sullivan, Dr. C. Villiers Stanford and Alberto Randegger.

As with everything, Best was conscientious in his preparation of the concerts of the Philharmonic Society. When necessary, he wrote out the organ part of a work to be performed, even though the music was to be performed on that one occasion only. Best's manuscript copies of the organ parts to Stanford's *The Three Holy Children* and Randegger's *Fridolin* still survive (Liverpool City Library Dq 1649 & Dq 1282), the former adorned with characteristically witty comments.

The organ Best played for these performances was the same instrument, by Bewsher and Fleetwood, which he had played as a young man in his previous tenure of the appointment.¹¹ In 1879, at the request of the Secretary of the Organ Sub-Committee, Best submitted a letter outlining his ideas for a new instrument for the Philharmonic Hall,¹² but nothing would appear to have been done, as the old instrument was still *in situ* in 1889, when Argent (1889:23) described it as '...a wonder to all right-thinking musical minds...'. As late as 1893, the organ was still blown by hand, the minutes of a General Committee meeting held on the 9th of October recorded that a letter had been received from Best '...complaining that the blower let the wind out of the organ at the Concert [on the] 3rd instant...' (Minutes of the General Committee 1892-1895).

Liverpool Philharmonic Society.

SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE YEAR 1873.

<p>7 TUESDAY, 14th OCTOBER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mad'lle MARIE ROZE, Mad'lle JUSTINE MACVITZ, ^{AND} Signor URIO.</p>	<p>10 TUESDAY, 25th NOVEMBER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mad'lle TITIENS, Signor CATALANI, SOLO PIANOFORTE Herr Dr. VON BÜLOW.</p>
<p>8 TUESDAY, 28th OCTOBER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mad'lle ALVSLEBEN, Mrs. SCOTT FENNELL, Mr. EDWARD LLOYD, ^{AND} Mr. SANTLEY.</p>	<p>11 TUESDAY, 9th DECEMBER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Engagements Pending).</i></p>
<p>9 TUESDAY, 11th NOVEMBER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Madame SINICO, Signor ARAMBURO, ^{AND} Mr. PERKINS.</p>	<p>12 TUESDAY, 23rd DECEMBER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“ MESSIAH.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Miss EDITH WYNNE, Madame PATEY, Mr. EDWARD LLOYD, ^{AND} Mr. PERKINS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Organist.....Mr. W. T. BEST.</p>
<p>CONDUCTOR.....SIR JULIUS BENEDICT.</p>	

140. *Liverpool Philharmonic Society Subscription Concerts 1873*
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]

In 1890 the *Musical Herald* published a description of a rehearsal for a Philharmonic Society concert:

.....A few days ago we spent an afternoon with the orchestra of this society [the Liverpool Philharmonic Society]. Mr. Best we see presiding at the organ. Sir Charles Hallé conducts, and the work in rehearsal is Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. The soloists are here, and we notice how they save their voices. Frequently Sir Charles stops to correct one or other of the instruments for wrong notes, and now and then a player comes up to the desk to compare and correct his part with the score. We observe the quiet, steady beat of the veteran conductor; here he merely gives an idea of the *tempo* in a few bars, then he goes on to the next number, now he selects a crotchety passage, and there he has a movement repeated several times till it is satisfactory. Soon he dismisses the band and we see him in the green room. Mr. Best is pointing out a German edition of Stradella and Erba's works, just published, and surprise is expressed at finding, note for note, about fifteen numbers of *Israel in Egypt*, incorporated in Handel's work without acknowledgement. Some of the borrowed numbers were "The Lord is a man of war", "The Hailstone chorus", "The Lord is my strength", "The people shall hear", "He rebuked the Red Sea", &c., &c.. As the conversation proceeds, we notice the comfortable furniture of the green-room, its grand piano and cosy chairs, and are especially interested by the hundreds of photographs in frames on the walls, and we seem to hear the voices and instruments of great performers, many of them long departed, who have taken part in performances in this famous hall..... (*Musical Herald* January 1890:293)

In 1894, Best resigned all his professional commitments on grounds of ill-health. His letter of resignation from the Liverpool Philharmonic Society at the meeting held on the 26th February. The minutes of that meeting recorded that the Committee had '...with regret received Mr. W. T. Best's resignation as Organist to the Philharmonic Society owing to ill health...aftersuch a long period of years...' (Minutes of the General Committee 1892-1895).

Received
I read letter from Mr W. B. Burt resigning
his position of Organist to the Society,
owing to ill health.

" The following resolution was
" moved by Mr. King and
" seconded by Mr. Telford

" The Committee have with regret received
" Mr. W. B. Burt's resignation as
" Organist to the Philharmonic Society
" owing to ill health, and it is unanimously
" resolved, that whilst deeply
" regretting the cause of the severance
" of the connection after such a long
" period of years, the Committee
" reluctantly accept said resignation."
" It be further resolved that the Chairman
" shall write in a suitable strain to
" Mr. Burt embodying the Committee's
" resolution."

Application An Application from Mr Eldon George Bates,
Hon Secy of the S. P. Church, Eye & Ear
Hospital, for the use of the Hall for
for a concert in connection with the
above, on Friday 9th March was
considered
It was resolved that the Hall be let.

THE
ELEVENTH CONCERT

WILL TAKE PLACE ON

TUESDAY, 12TH MARCH, 1889.

THE PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE—

SULLIVAN'S ORATORIO,

“THE PRODIGAL SON,”

FOR THE FIRST PART,

AND A MISCELLANEOUS SELECTION WILL FORM THE
SECOND PART OF THE CONCERT.

Vocalists:

Miss THUDICHUM,

Miss HILDA WILSON,

Mr. HENRY PIERCY,

AND

Mr. SANTLEY.

Organist:

Mr. W. T. BEST.

Conductor:

SIR CHARLES HALLÉ.

142. Sullivan - 'The Prodigal Son'
[Archives of the Royal Philharmonic Society]

Concerted Movement

No. 10.

African nobles (obedient) The king asks a few questions.
— The Three Children (quite rude) —

Allegro assai vivace.

mf
O King, ... live for ever ...
[Chorus of noble sycophants]

Orch. 1

Maestoso.

Enter King. (without stockings.)
is it true?
[sings with]

Orch. 2

Adagio.

The king.
ye shall be cut the same hour into the midst of a

burning fi...er y furnace).
and who is that god that shall deliver you

143. Best's manuscript organ part for Stanford's 'The Three Holy Children'.
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

Organ Part to Randegger's Cantata "Fridolin".

Prologue. (1=52.) *maestoso.* (Instrumental Prelude.) *Poco più.* (♩ = 66.)

Great Cue *mf* *Chorus. with orch.* *pi-ous youth read*

Organ.

And-o-in who served the Lord with zeal, And did his du-ty faith-ful-ly, Come there by mee or
 weal. *For this, when sub-tle foe con-spired this sought ier him to*

144. Best's manuscript organ part for Randegger's 'Fridolin'.

[Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

ORATORIO,
"THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN,"

Conducted by the Composer,
DR. C. VILLIERS STANFORD.
(First time in Liverpool.)

*The Solo parts by Miss MARY DAVIES, Mr. HENRY PIERCY,
Mr. BANTOCK PIERPOINT, Mr. ADDISON HILL, Mr. HILTON,
and Mr. BRIDSON.*

FRIDOLIN,
OR
THE MESSAGE TO THE FORGE.

A Dramatic Cantata.

THE WORDS FOUNDED ON SCHILLER'S BALLAD,

"Der Ganz nach dem Eisenhammer,"

BY

ERMINIA RUDERSDORFF.

THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY

ALBERTO RANDEGGER.

CONDUCTED BY THE COMPOSER.

145. Programmes for Stanford's 'The Three Holy Children' and Randegger's
'Fridolin' [Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society].

As with his work as a civic organist, organist at the Royal Albert Hall, travelling virtuoso and solo organist at the Handel Festivals, W. T. Best's lifelong involvement with the English choral movement put him, once again, at the heart of Victorian musical culture.

CHAPTER 15

CHURCH ORGANIST

*.....In his own peculiar sardonic way he [Best] was devout, and was meticulously careful as to what should or should not be played in a sacred building.....
He was a churchman and knew his Prayer Book, and was no ignoramus in matters relating to the service its details, and was all on the side of the "cathedral" tradition.....*

*(The Late W. T. Best - Some Reminiscences' by Edward Watson
in Musical Opinion, February 1922:426&427)*

The 19th century saw enormous changes in the music used in the worship of the Established Church. The changes in parochial church music were directly influenced by the success of the Methodist and Evangelical movements, among whose aims was that of greater congregational participation. After the Reform Bill of 1832 there was a new interest in elementary education, and the first two school textbooks on the teaching of music-reading appeared. These were John Turner's *Manual of Vocal Instruction: chiefly with a View to Psalmody* (1833) and Sarah Glover's *Scheme for Rendering Psalmody Congregational* (1835). As their titles imply, these primers were also intended to improve congregational singing in church. The introduction of music teaching into schools also coincided with the Anglo-Catholic revival (known as the 'Oxford Movement'), and amongst the results of this movement was the replacing of the 'choir' of charity children in the organ gallery by a surpliced choir in the chancel, and a move to introduce choral services into parish churches. The model for this was Leeds Parish Church, where the vicar, Walter Hook (1798-1875) and the organist, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, introduced daily choral services of a very high standard. New scholarly editions of liturgical music by Rimbault, Dyce and Bishop also began to appear at this time.¹ Psalters with Anglican chants were published by S. S. Wesley (1843) and John Hullah (1844) and Thomas Helmore's *Manual of Plainsong*, which was widely adopted by Anglo-Catholic churches, appeared in 1851. The aim of this last publication was to encourage congregational participation in the choral portions of the service. Helmore, with the assistance of John Mason Neale, produced *The Hymnal Noted*, which contained hymns and tunes drawn mainly from the Sarum Gradual. Anglican hymn tunes also underwent a change with forthright contributions by such composers as Monk, Gauntlett, Redhead and Smart. The publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in the 1860's saw a more 'emotional' harmonic style being adopted by John Bacchus Dykes and later by Joseph Barnby.²

There were also reforms in the music of the Cathedrals, the most flagrant financial abuses being swept away by the Dean and Chapter Act of 1840. An investigation into the running of the cathedral foundations was undertaken by the Cathedral Commissioners, who reported in 1854, but most of their recommendations took a generation to be put into effect. Influential pamphlets such as John Jebb's *Choral Service of the United Church of England and Ireland* (1843) and S. S. Wesley's *A Few Words on Cathedral Music* (1849) helped to foster a desire for

reform. The standards attained at St. Michael's College at Tenbury (founded and financed by Frederick Gore Ouseley), the Temple Church and at Leeds Parish Church were influential in initiating reforms in the cathedrals.³

Although primarily known as a concert organist, W. T. Best held appointments as a church organist throughout a large part of his career. He never held a cathedral or collegiate appointment, and the majority of the posts were within the Established Church. Best was organist at the following churches:

1840(?) ⁴ -1847(?)	Pembroke Road Baptist Chapel, Liverpool.
1847(?) -1851(?)	The Church for the Blind, Liverpool.
1855	St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London.
1855	Lincoln's Inn Chapel, London.
1860-1863(?)	Wallasey Parish Church, Cheshire.
1863(64)-1866	Holy Trinity, Walton Breck, Liverpool.
1879-1882	West Derby Parish Church, Liverpool.

[This last post was relinquished on the advice of his doctor (MS, 15th May 1897:310)]

As one would expect from a musician of Best's ability and temperament, he held strong views on the position of the organ in church worship. He contrasted the situation in England, where '...there is no recognised part of the service assigned to it [the organ]. It is heard before the service opens, when the people are, as it were wiping their feet on it, and it is the symbol for them to leave the church, as if the instrument were something improper to be heard alone...', with France, where, '...an artistic interlude may be heard on the great western organ, founded on the plain chant of the liturgical hymns, after each verse, not to name other recognised opportunities where the instrument heightens the solemnities of the varied offices of the church...' (MH January 1890:291). In Holland and Germany, Best remarked that '...the largest organs fail to equal the unisonal thunder of congregations in the time-honoured chorales when accompanied by every contrapuntal device improvised by the ablest players...', whereas the English organist '...timorously "plays over the tune", sticks mechanically to the vocal parts, and debases his instrument into a huge pitch-pipe for the singers...' (MH January 1890:291).

In view of the important rôle that Best thought the organ should fulfill during a service, it comes as no surprise to learn that he would '..."indulge his fancies to the full in brilliant extemporizations"...' (Mansfield 1918:233). Statham (1909:231) thought that Best '...as a church organist...shone too much: he would not efface himself sufficiently. Whenever Best was at the organ, the organ must, so to speak, be in front...'. However, it is of interest to consider Best's approach to the different aspects of work as a church organist.

(a) Hymns and Hymn Tunes

'...Those who heard him [Best] in church still remember how, in the course of an ordinary service, he would seem to pour his whole soul and his whole gift in the playing of a hymn tune...'. Best believed that organ and choir should give a firm lead to the congregation during hymn-singing as, '...congregations invariably hesitate to commence unless 'led'...' (Lightwood 1926:145). He regarded with contempt 'word painting' in hymn playing, and the dynamic markings added to the hymns in certain hymn books, as in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, where '...the miserable editors are perpetually making alternate marks for shouting and whispering when "night" (*pp*) and "light" (*ff*) occur. Anything after sundown must be whispered, on principles probably connected with burglary...' (Mansfield 1918:221). He goes on to say that Henry Smart's tune to "Hark! Hark! my Soul" was made ridiculous by the '...parson editors...' dividing '...a couple of lines into a shout followed by a whisper...'.

It was Best's practice to improvise the introduction to each hymn and also an interlude between the verses.⁵ The *Musical Herald* (January 1890:292) regarded his '...organ improvisations leading to the...introduction of the hymn about to be sung...' as one of the noteworthy features of his service playing. One young boy remembered Best's '...long preludes to the hymns and his interminable interludes...' (Watson 1922:426). It is quite clear that Best attached great importance to the

playing of hymn tunes or chorales. He provides examples in all of his organ tutors. In the *First Organ Book* ([1883]:22) there is a '*Prelude on a melody from the Scotch Psalter*' (*Martyr's Tune AD 1615*) in which the chorale is presented, undecorated, line by line. There are sixteen chorales arranged for the organ in *The Art of Organ Playing* (1867/68 Part 2:78 *et seq.*). The *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:127-134) contains '*Six Chorales*' which '*...shew the different forms in which the Tune may be announced to the Congregation...*'. These different forms include:

- | | |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| No.1 | One clavier. |
| No.2 | Two clavier - melody in the Tenor. |
| No.3 | Two clavier - melody in the Soprano. |
| No.4 | Three clavier. |
| No.5 | One clavier - melody in the Bass. |

No.21 of *Thirty Progressive Studies for the Organ* Op.33 ([1859]:23) is in the form of a 'chorale', complete with 'interlude'.

A clear idea of how Best accompanied hymn singing can be gained from his setting of *The Old Hundredth Psalm*, published by Augener.⁶ This begins with an organ prelude of 33 bars, in which the tune is presented in the tenor register. There is a short organ interlude between each of the verses. Best varies the organ accompaniment in each of the verses. The accompaniment for verse 1 doubles the vocal parts, whereas that for verse 2 continues the style of the preceding interlude. Verse 3 is accompanied by the pedal bass alone (32 ft., 16 ft. and 8 ft. - *mp*), whilst the final verse (verse 4) has an expanded version of the accompaniment to verse 2. The hymn is harmonised for a choir of four voices. Verses 1 and 3 are harmonised fully, albeit differently, whereas in verses 2 and 4 (the verses with the elaborate organ accompaniment) the choir sings in unison, only breaking into harmony at the the cadences which mark the end of each line.

THE OLD HUNDREDDTH PSALM.

"All people that on earth do dwell."

*) PRELUDE.

W.T. Best.

Con moto. $\text{♩} = 50.$
Ch. 8. 4. — Gt. Diapasons, 8. — Ped. 16. 8.

ORGAN.

Ch. *p* Gt. 8. *mp*

Ped.

The musical score consists of four systems of staves. The first system is a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The second system continues the grand staff. The third system features a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The fourth system also features a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. Annotations include 'Ch.', 'Gt.', and 'Ped.' with dynamic markings like *p* and *mp*.

*) See also "Cecilia," Book XV. — Short Organ Preludes on Old English Psalm-Tunes. No 3.

W. T. Best, London, 1881.

146. The organ prelude to W. T. Best's setting of 'The Old Hundredth Psalm' [Augener].

are His flock, He doth us feed, And

for His sheep He doth us take.....

Verse 3.
O en - ter then His

(Accompanied by the Pedal Bases only.)

mp 32.16.8.

10558

147. The end of verse 2 and the beginning of verse 3 of W. T. Best's setting of 'The Old Hundredth Psalm' [Augener], showing the interlude between the verses.

Although this setting was specially prepared for publication, it is likely that it gives a fair idea of the manner in which Best accompanied hymns.

The organ prelude to this published setting had an independent existence as the third of *Twelve Short Preludes on Old English Psalm Tunes* (Augener, *Cecilia* - Book xv). It is possible that all of these *Preludes* were intended as introductions to the various hymns concerned, in addition to being independent pieces of music for organ. Arguments in favour of this view can be summarise as follows:

1. Best did improvise such *Preludes* in his church work, and uses No.3 as the *Prelude* to his published choral setting of '*The Old Hundredth Psalm*'.
2. In each of the *Preludes* the tune is presented only once.
3. Except in two of the *Preludes*, the tune is presented in an undecorated form, and in a prominent manner.
4. Some of the *Preludes*, such as No.12, based on Croft's tune 'St. Anne', do little more than announce the tune. In this particular example, each line is presented as a pedal solo, preceded by a semiquaver flourish on the manuals.

Abdy Williams in *The Story of Organ Music* (1905:255) describes these *Preludes* as '..."Choralvorspiele", in the style of Bach...'. Adlung, in *Anleitung zur musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (1783 edition) describes the purpose of composing (and extemporising) chorale preludes as:

1. Preparing the congregation for the key of the music.
2. To inform them of the tune.
3. To delight them '...through fluent ideas...' (*durch wohlfliessende Gedanken*).

Williams (1974:10) states that many of Bach's chorale preludes seem to aim more at point No.3, and even beyond it, at setting a mood, preparing the congregation for the sense and style of the words of the hymn.

It is reasonable to assume that Best's aim was at least to cover points 1 and 2. There are also features which make it likely that he was also aiming at point No.3. It is significant that he heads each *Prelude*, not with the name of the tune, but with the first line of the words, thus associating the tune with a particular hymn, and therefore with a specific mood and meaning (Hubert Parry followed a similar procedure with his Chorale Preludes). Thus Best's seventh *Prelude*, which is based on Webbe's tune *Melcombe* (now associated with the words 'New every morning is the love') is given a serious setting (adagio) in this instance, as the composer has associated the tune with the words 'Hail Sacred Feast'.

Further confirmatory evidence for the view that Best intended these short *Preludes* as introductions to the hymns concerned comes from his *Collection of Organ Pieces for Church Use* (1866:37,43&47). Numbers 13, 15 and 17 are chorale preludes on the tunes *London* (C.M.), *Halifax* (L.M.) and *St. Bride* (S.M.) respectively. Before the first of these Best writes:

These CHORALE PRELUDES are intended to be played immediately before the Choir and Congregation sing the Tunes on which they are founded. The Melody must always have a separate Clavier assigned to it, and be made very prominent throughout.

Watson (1922:426) relates the following anecdote relating to Best's practice of improvising interludes during the verses of a hymn.

.....He [Best] detested "Miles Lane" [a hymn tune by William Shrubsole (1760-1806)]. The clergyman, on his part, liked it. It was "congregational". Best retorted that this was just what it was not, because the high notes in the refrain.....However, the minister could not be convinced, so Best "gave way". Sunday came, with the hymn. Between each verse he played his customary interlude, but modulated a semitone higher each time so adroitly that the minister, who was not musical, detected nothing. From about the fourth verse to the end, the refrain, at all events, was an organ solo.....

Whatever the veracity of this particular anecdote, such behaviour would have been entirely in character. Best's relations with the clergy bear all the hallmarks of his relationships with those in authority.⁷

Best edited a volume of hymn tunes - *Eighty Chorales* - which was published by Hime of Liverpool in 1848. The tunes were printed in open score, with the organ part on separate staves and the tenor part written in the tenor clef. Four of the tunes were specially composed by Best himself⁸ '...in order to render some Hymns available to music appropriate with the style adhered to in this book...' (Best, *Eighty Chorales* - preface). In addition to these four tunes, Best composed a further eight hymn tunes, two of which were published in 1903 by Vincent as "The Last Compositions of W. T. Best".

Eighty Chorales

(PSALM AND HYMN TUNES)

Orally harmonized in Four Parts,

with

Organ Accompaniment,

by

W. T. Best.

EST 511 H11

Page 148, 61

Liverpool:

HIME AND SON, 51, CHURCH STREET.

148. Title page of W. T. Best's 'Eighty Chorales' [Hime].

A musical score for a hymn titled 'St. Augustine. H. M. (8 lines 7s.)'. The score is arranged in three systems, each containing four staves. The first two staves of each system are for vocal parts, and the last two are for piano accompaniment. The music is written in a common time signature and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

149. One of the hymn tunes specially composed for 'Eighty Chorales' by W. T. Best [Hime]

The Last Compositions

by

W. T. BEST.

TWO HYMN TUNES.

Copyright.

Price 2¢

"JESUS LIVES! NO LONGER NOW
CAN THY TERRORS, DEATH, APPAL US."

Two musical staves for piano accompaniment. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, primarily using eighth and sixteenth notes.

150. 'The Last Compositions of W. T. Best' [Vincent].

(b) The Psalms

In view of Best's views on 'word painting' in hymns, it comes as no surprise to learn, as was reported by the *Musical Herald* (January 1890:291&292), that he found it '...too prevalent...' in the accompanying of the Psalms, and continued '..."thunder" is a chance not to be despised, "lightening" is good, but "snow" puzzles the painter; he can attempt a picture of the "refuge for the wild goats", "the stony rocks for the conies", and "the lions roaring after their prey", but the ox and ass are unmanageable...'. Mansfield (1918:221), continues this theme, quoting from a letter written by Best, in which he stated that it was '..."melancholy to record" that organists often used their instruments "in a miserable attempt to imitate the physical operations of nature". This "fell purpose", was mostly accomplished by the right hand which skipped about in the upper octaves for "lightening or aviary effects"; while the thunder and the "larger fauna of the jungle" were attended to by the left hand, which "stirred up a little open rebellion on its own account by a fearful rumbling and bellowing noise in the deep sounding bass of the unfortunate organ"...'.

Best composed a number of Anglican Chants for use in the singing of the Psalms, and these can be found in the following collections - *Chants Adapted to the Psalter* and *Chants for Four Voices*, both of which were edited by Best himself, and the *Collection of Chants*, edited by B. St.J. B. Joule.⁹ In the two collections that he edited, Best drew on the great tradition of English church music, and included chants by Croft, C. Gibbons, Battishill, Blow, Boyce, Tallis, Nares, Crotch and Samuel Wesley, as well as those by his contemporaries. In *Chants for Four Voices*, Best introduces five single chants which are based on Gregorian plainsong. The tunes (numbers 38, 29, 41, 42 & 43) are laid out in 4-parts, in the manner of an Anglican chant.

This wide range of interest is also reflected in the Psalter which Best edited. In this he was responsible for the pointing of the words, and used the 'ancient ecclesiastical chant' (*i.e.* plainsong) for the music. Here again, the plainsong is laid out like an Anglican chant. At the beginning of the Psalter Best gives

Gregorian.

No. 42.

Musical score for No. 42, Gregorian chant. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. It consists of five staves. The first four staves are for the voices, and the fifth is for the piano. The music is in C major and common time. The piano accompaniment features a simple harmonic accompaniment with a bass line and a treble line.

Gregorian.

No. 43.

Musical score for No. 43, Gregorian chant. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. It consists of five staves. The first four staves are for the voices, and the fifth is for the piano. The music is in C major and common time. The piano accompaniment features a simple harmonic accompaniment with a bass line and a treble line.

END OF SINGLE CHANTS.

151. Two of the plainsong tunes from 'Chants for Four Voices' [Novello].

The Psalter,

POINTED AND ADAPTED TO THE

Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant;

WITH THE

CANTICLES, PROPER PSALMS,

AND

Creed of St. Athanasius.

BY

W. T. Best.

Price Two Shillings and Sixpence.

152. The title page of W. T. Best's 'Psalter pointed and adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant' [Novello].

DAY XVII.

Evening Prayer.

PSALM 89.—*Misericordias Domini.*



MY SONG shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be shewing thy truth from one generation to another.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be set up for ever: thy truth shalt thou stablish in the heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have sworn unto David my servant.

4 Thy seed will I stablish for ever: and set up thy throne from one generation to another.

5 O Lord, the very heavens shall praise thy wondrous works: and thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who is he among the clouds: that shall be compared unto the Lord?

7 And what is he among the gods: that shall be like unto the Lord?

8 God is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints: and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.

9 O Lord God of hosts, who is like unto thee: thy truth most mighty Lord, is on every side.

10 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: thou stillest the waves there of when they rise.

11 Thou hast subdued Egypt and destroyed it: thou hast scattered thine enemies abroad with thy mighty arm.

12 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: thou hast laid the foundation of the round world, and all that therein is.

13 Thou hast made the north and the south: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy Name.

14 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.

15 Righteousness and equity are the habitation of thy seat: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

16 Blessed is the people O Lord that can rejoice in thee: they shall walk in the light of thy countenance.

(142)

153. The setting of Psalm 89 from W. T. Best's 'Psalter pointed and adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant' [Novello].

'Directions' as to how the Psalms are to be performed.¹⁰ Statham (1909:234) objected to double notes at the conclusion of certain chants in this Psalter, and his criticism was answered in characteristic fashion by Best:

.....I am in receipt of your sentiments anent Psalter, &c.. The occasional cadence with *two notes* (in some chants) also occurs in many "Protestant" specimens; and if you examine the *Airs*, and especially the *Recitatives*, of Mendelssohn's Oratorios, you will find that he, and also Handel, give, whenever they please, *two notes* to one syllable; thinking that the effort will not produce water on the brain, if the singers "tongue" it well, as it is their business to do..... (Statham 1909:234)

Although Best tended to harmonise and treat plainsong in the same manner as an Anglican chant, he was, as Statham (1909:230) points out, '...fully acquainted with the old church Modes and their literature...'.

(c) Services, Anthems etc.

Best's ideal in church music would appear to have been the 'cathedral' tradition (Watson 1922:427). Music in the cathedrals was at a low ebb during a large part of the century. Sir Herbert Brewer (1931:3&4) describes the situation at Gloucester Cathedral during S. S. Wesley's time as organist (1865-1876) in the following words:

.....Wesley was essentially an organist and composer and not a choir trainer or conductor. In fact, towards the end of his time the training of the choristers was left in the hands of one of the lay clerks. When a full rehearsal of the choir took place the men made no attempt to sing out but just whispered their parts.....

This is surprising in view of S. S. Wesley's achievements at Leeds Parish Church (1842-1849), which provided the inspiration for the music at many other churches. Best himself was impressed with the standards achieved at Leeds, and he expressed

his views in a letter to the *Musical Standard* in 1869 (Vol.x, No.241, 13th March 1869:128):

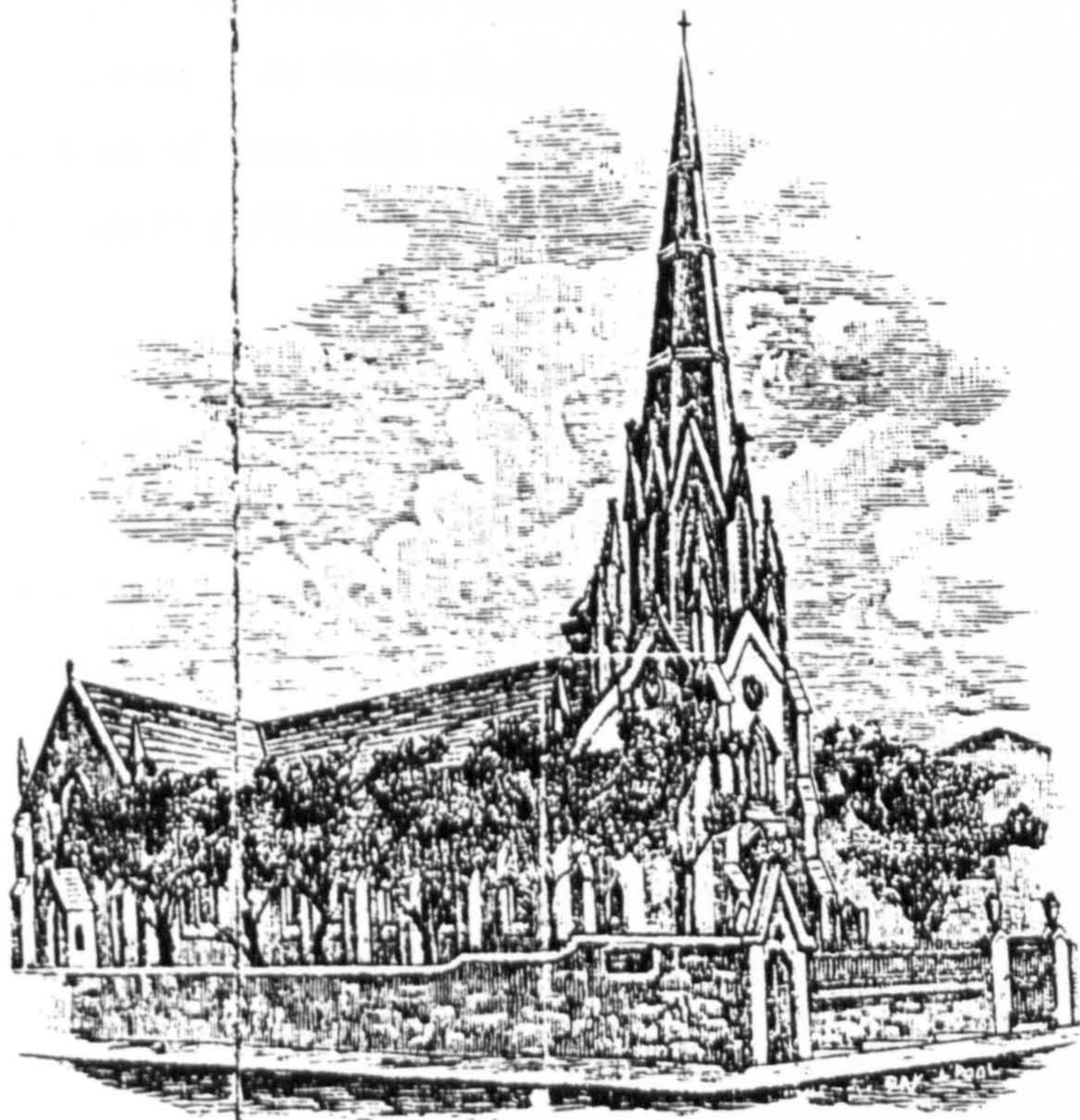
....."May I be permitted to say that nothing affords me greater gratification, when visiting Leeds, than to attend the Parish Church, where the choral portions of Divine service are rendered in the most impressive and admirable manner by a body of singer unparalleled throughout the country, both in point of numbers as well as the excellence of their musical training. Since Dr. [S. S.] Wesley's retirement, nearly twenty years ago, I understand the numerical strength of the choir has been trebled, and it is only at Leeds where the ideal of a truly efficient choral service is realised - presenting thereby significant contrast to the meagre singing in our cathedrals".....

At Holy Trinity, Walton Breck, Best had a partly professional choir (MS, Vol.v, No.103, 21st July 1866:39), and he was able to provide an elaborate musical service which emulated, and may even have surpassed that at Leeds (Parrott 1897:14&15). This type of service, however, was not to the taste of some of the parishioners.¹¹ At West Derby Church, during Best's tenure of the post of organist, settings such as 'Chipp in A'¹² were sung, and again, the choir was wholly or partly made up of professional singers (Watson 1922:426&427).

It is reasonable to assume that Best approached church organ accompaniment in the same manner as his recital work - making full use of the resources of the instrument. This approach did not always meet with approval, one writer spoke of Best '...indulging freely in those peculiarities which characterise his church playing...', and thought that Best had '...much to learn in playing accompaniments in the church...' and that he should '...subdue his desire for prominence, and recollect that organ-playing in church and in the concert room have no sympathy or relationship with each other...' (MS, Vol.xi, No. 272, 16th October 1869:187&190). In suggesting that Best subdue his desire for prominence when playing in church, this writer had missed the point that it was Best's intention that the organ should play a prominent part in the act of worship.

As was noted earlier, Best did not play an opening voluntary, as he objected to playing music for people '...to wipe their boots upon...' (Watson 1922:327), but reserved the organ for the *Venite*, which he '...usually played

Holy Trinity Church, Walton Breck.



Opened April 4th, 1847; Consecrated April 12th, 1849.

Rev. H. W. CAMPBELL BAUGH, M.A., Vicar.
W. G. H. KENT, }
W. ROBERTS, } Churchwardens.

154. Holy Trinity Church, Walton Breck, Liverpool.

arrestingly on rather full organ...' (Watson 1922:426&427). At Wallasey Parish Church Best would *crescendo* gradually from the versicle "The Lord's name be praised" until he announced the *Venite* loudly, in order to '...wake the sinners up!...' as they had been '...cheating and bamboozling each other long enough all the week through...' (Mansfield 1918:231&232)

In spite of his opposition to word-painting, Best did use the organ to heighten the meaning of the words of the liturgy, probably during passages which were intoned by the choir. At West Derby Church he instructed the choir to maintain a normal level of tone, and '...leave the expression to the organ...' at certain parts of the service (Watson 1922:426).

When Best's choral resources resulted in Anglican chants being used for the singing of the canticles, he did his utmost to make them effective by his use of the organ. William Faulkes remarked that Best would play '...some fine introductions to the *Magnificat* which led a listener to expect a musical setting but the thing only petered out into a chant...' (Harrison nd:8&9). It is interesting to note that amongst Best's published church music is *The Morning and Evening Service, together with the Office for the Holy Communion - set to music in simple chant form for Choir (S.A.T.B.) and Organ (Novello's Parish Choir Book - Numbers 1032-1035)*.

Best's compositions for the church cover a wide spectrum. In addition to the service mentioned above, he wrote a *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* based on the 'Ancient Gregorian Plain Chant'. He composed his *Morning and Evening Service in F Op.40* for Leeds Parish Church and a *Cathedral Service* for Carlisle Cathedral. There are also settings of the *Dies Irae*, *Benedicite*, *Athanasian Creed* and the *Responses to the Commandments*. Among his anthems are *The Lord is Great in Zion* and *O Praise the Lord, call upon his name*. Best also edited a *Choral Service Manual*.¹³ What characterises Best's compositions for the church is that he was prepared, on the one hand to compose a simple setting in chant form, or adapt plainsong, and on the other to write an elaborate 'cathedral' setting. Best's knowledge of church music, and his wide range of sympathies is impressive, as is

his ability to provide liturgical 'Gebrauchsmusik' to suite the resources of not only the small parish church and the non-conformist chapel, but also of the cathedral.

(d) W. T. Best as Choirmaster

It is not always clear whether Best was also responsible for training the choir in the various churches where he was organist, and certainly at Lincoln's Inn Chapel there was also a choirmaster whose sole responsibility it was to train the choir.¹⁴ At Holy Trinity, Walton Breck, Liverpool, Best had a mixed choir which consisted mainly of paid singers (Parrott 1897:24)¹⁵, the cost of the choral establishment being above £250 per annum (MS Vol.v, No.103, 21st July 1866:39). Services at Holy Trinity, in Best's day, were said to resemble those at Leeds Parish Church or St. George's, Hanover Square (Parrott 1897:14&24). Best's appointment to West Derby Parish Church in 1879 '...made the musical part of the service there famous...' (Carr 1951:14).

Mansfield (1918:220) suggests that Best left the training of choirs to his students, and Watson (1922:426) states that '...he was no choirmaster, deputing all this kind of work to a deputy, paying him out of his own pocket...'. As a former chorister at West Derby Church remarked to Watson (1922:426):

....."Eh! he [Best] was a nice gentleman; he never taught us any singin' himself; he just came on Sundays and played the orgin [sic], and for the full practice on Fridays, and always had his pockets full of sweets for us lads. Eh! he was a nice gentleman".....

Bearing in mind that after 1855 there was no financial need for Best to do church work, it seems shortsighted to infer that because he employed deputies to train the choir that he did not enjoy that side of his work. It is more likely that his heavy schedule as a concert organist prevented his devoting time to choirtraining. Certainly at West Derby Church he did rehearse the choir on occasions¹⁶, and there are several anecdotes relating to his time there.¹⁷

Morning and Evening Service

IN F.

Composed for the Parish Church, Leeds.

No.		Vocal Score	Vocal Parts	No.		Vocal Score	Vocal Parts
1	Te Deum,	1.6	1.0	5	Nicene Creed,	1.0	1.0
2	Benedictus,	1.0	0.6	6	Offertory,	1.0	0.6
3	Sanctus,	0.6	with No. 5	7	Cantate Domino,	2.0	1.0
4	Kyrie Eleison,			8	Deus Misericordiarum,		

INSCRIBED TO THE ORGANIST

Rev. E. Boulton Esq. and the Members of the Choir.

BY

W. T. Best.

OP. 40.

Ed. Sta Hall.

*Price Complete
Vocal Score 6s.
Vocal Parts 1*

London Sacred Music Warehouse,
NOVELLO, EWER & CO.
Music Sellers by Appointment to Her Majesty.
1, Fenchurch Street, W. & 35, Abchurch Lane, E.C.

155. Title page of the 'Morning and Evening Service' Op.40 [Novello]

THE
MORNING AND EVENING
SERVICE

TOGETHER WITH THE

OFFICE FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION

SET TO MUSIC IN SIMPLE CHANT FORM

BY

W. T. BEST.

Price One Shilling, or, singly :—

No.	1. TE DEUM LAUDAMUS	2. JUBILATE DEO	..	..	..	..	..	4d.
3.	KYRIE ELEISON.	4. GLORIA TIBI	5. NICENE CREED.	6. SANCTUS.				
	7. GLORIA IN EXCELSIS	..	..	..	..	..	..	4d.
8.	MAGNIFICAT.	9. NUNC DIMITTIS	..	..	..	..	..	3d.

LONDON & NEW YORK
NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

156. Title page of the 'Morning and Evening Service' in simple chant form [Novello].

An Evening Service,

consisting of the

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis,

adapted to the Ancient Gregorian plain Chant,
 In Score for Four Voices, with a free Organ part,
 by
W. T. Best.

Reduced Price 1/6

London, NOVELLO, EWER & CO. 1, Berners Street, W. and 57, 58, Queen Street, E.C.

MAGNIFICAT.

ALLEGRO MODERATO.

My soul doth magni.fy the Lord: and my spirit*

SOPRANO.
ALTO.

TENOR.
BASS.

ORGAN.

My soul doth magni.fy the Lord: and my spirit*

hath re.joic.ed in God my Sa....viour. For he hath..... re..

hath re.joic.ed in God my Sa....viour. For he hath..... re..

The asterisk * indicates that a slight pause must be made wherever it occurs.

An Evening Service. W. T. BEST.

25.51

157. Title page of the 'Morning and Evening Service' based on the 'Ancient Gregorian Plain Chant [Novello].

(e) W. T. Best's playing at other churches

From time to time, when circumstances allowed, Best played for services at churches where he was not the resident organist. In 1863, presumably after leaving Wallasey Parish Church and before becoming organist at Holy Trinity, Walton, Breck, Best played at the Liverpool Church for the Blind (where he had been organist over a decade earlier) for a number of weeks. This is revealed in a letter from Best to A. J. Kurtz, the secretary of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (British Library Add. 33965, f.11).¹⁸ Mansfield (1918:222) relates the following anecdote about Best playing for a service at the City Temple, London.

.....Mr. Ebenezer Minshall, for many years organist of the City Temple, tells a good story.....He says:

Mr. Best was giving a recital at the Bow and Bromley Institute one Saturday evening. After the performance I spoke to him and asked him if he would play for me on the Sunday evening. He very kindly consented to do so. At first he wanted to play voluntaries only, but I persuaded him to take the whole service. As he was unaccustomed to Nonconformist "use", I promised to tell him what to do. When Dr. Parker (the minister of the church at that time) rose to give out the first hymn, something like the following took place:

Dr. P.	"Hymn No.344"
W. T. B	"Do I play over now?"
E. M.	"No, not yet"
Dr. P.	"Hymn No.344, Tune 37"
W. T. B.	"Do I play now?"
E. M.	"No, no, not yet"
W. T. B.	"—— it! When?"

But after Mr. Minshall had piloted Best through the service as far as the offertory he (Best) asked if he could go on "as long as he liked", and upon receiving an affirmative reply, delighted the congregation with a middle voluntary ten minutes in length.....

When Best was engaged to play for a church service of whatever type, he approached the task with characteristic thoroughness and attention to detail:

.....Engaged to play for a service in a Nonconformist church for a few dozen Sunday School children, holding a combined service of song, a small cantata, and a few hymns, Best would ask the choirmaster to meet him at the church a week or two before, ascertain exactly what music was to be performed, study the organ, and have a proper rehearsal the day before the service..... ('Recollections of W. T. Best' by 'X' in MO May 1937:728&729)

(f) The Church Congress at Liverpool

In 1869 the Church Congress was held at Liverpool. The opening service took place on 5th October, at St. Michael's Church, and as the *Musical Standard* of 25th September (Vol.xi, No.269:156) revealed – '...the Responses are by Mr. Best; the Benedicite is by Mr. Best; the Credo by Mr. Best. The Hundredth Psalm is arranged (!) by Mr. Best. The single chants to the Psalms (which last are pointed by Mr. Best) are also harmonised by Mr. Best...'. There was to be a choir of two hundred voices, and the service was to be under the '...direction of Mr. Best...'. The magazine found little to recommend at this opening service, or the one which closed the Congress. Best's compositions were '...much complained of as being dry, hard and unsympathetic...', and in his organ playing he indulged '...freely in those peculiarities which characterise his church playing...' (MS, Vo.xi, No.272, 16th October 1869:190). The same issue of the *Musical Standard* also published a letter highly critical of Best, his compositions and playing at the Congress.¹⁹ The *Responses* were described as '...namby-pamby...', the *Benedictus* as '...remarkable for its heaviness and want of tonality and tune...', and the *Hundredth Psalm* was '..."agonised" not "harmonised"...' and was '...mere burlesque...'. Best's playing was also criticised, the '...crude harmonies and the eternal trumpet accompaniment in which he [Best] indulged...' being '...sadly out of place...' and '...neither impressive nor devotional...'. The writer concludes by expressing the hope that no future Church Congress should '...be doomed to hear such incongruities as at the opening at Liverpool...'. The following issue of the magazine was equally uncomplimentary:

.....Reading the other day in a Liverpudlian journal I.....came across the following:-
"The musical part of the service had been specially arranged by Mr. Best, and was chaste (!) and beautiful, and well adapted to a temporary congregation, the arrangements being distinguished by simplicity (!) and a novel and striking effect was produced by the occasional introduction of a trumpet bass accompaniment, which was additionally useful in keeping the voices together". The arrangements were, as you know, anything but "simple": as to "beauty" that is a matter of opinion. Some good critics said that the version of the Hundredth Psalm used on this occasion reminded them of a subject under the rack at the "Holy Inquisition"; so complete was the torture, aurally speaking..... (MS, Vol.xi, No.273, 23rd October 1869:204)

It is possible that both the correspondent and the magazine were objecting to the use of 'contemporary' music at the service, as Purcell, Croft, Green[e], Battishill, Attwood, Walmisley, or '...even...' Wesley, Hopkins and Goss are suggested as alternative composers who would have provided music of a '...devotional and elevating nature...', in contrast to the '...vapid insipidity...' of Best's music. They may also have objected to Best's insistence that the organ have an important rôle in its own right in the worship of the church.

(g) Organ Music for the Offertory

In the *Musical Herald* (January 1890:291) Best referred to the '...artistic interlude...' based on plainsong, which the organists in French churches improvised between the verses sung by the choir. Amongst Best's manuscript organ music there are some pieces (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282), which are intended to be played '...between the Offertory Sentences...', in the same manner as the '...artistic interlude...' mentioned above. The manuscript is dated August 1872, and is inscribed to 'Dom Pedro Luis Gareito Isle de Womans'. There are four interludes, each based on the same musical phrase. [see page 344]

After the last interlude Best adds '...After No.4, play No.2, and observe the order given; always coming to a close with No.1, or No.2, both of which are in the major key...'. After this, he writes, in characteristic manner:

.....When you have gone through this snake-charming music seventy times 7; six hundred pounds will have been collected, which you will immediately run away with, and afterwards be incarcerated.

To The Baron Garrett, the parrot - of the Azores (Best 1872, Liverpool City Library Dq 1282)

Organ music - le pages between the
Offering sentences.
 W. T. Best August 1872

Andante con moto

— No. 1. —

R.H. Vici di Sinda I.H. Sw.

L.H. Vici di Sinda, or Baglam. R.H. Sw.

R.H. *And. 4te played on 8th lower on keys. I.H. Sw.*

Back to No. 1. —
 — New York

158. W. T. Best 'Organ Music for the Offertory'

[Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

(h) The Church Musician

That W. T. Best continued to work as a church organist after becoming firmly established as an internationally known concert organist supports the view that he considered his work in this field to be of importance. If, as Mansfield (1918:220) implies, he was not happy in such work, it is more likely that it was the specific circumstances of certain of his church appointments, rather than the idea of the work itself, which he found uncongenial. Best's relationship with the clergy would appear to have all the characteristics of those he had with people in authority, and he did not suffer fools gladly.²⁰

Best held the view that the organ should have a very definite rôle to play, in its own right, within the confines of the liturgy, and he obviously made every effort to achieve this. His accompaniments made full use of the colour inherent in the 19th century organ.

It would appear that Best's preference was for a fully choral 'cathedral service', but where circumstances did not allow for this, he was prepared to put all his skill into enhancing a simpler form of music in the service. He would also appear to have preferred a professional or semi-professional choir of women and men, but it is clear that he had boys in his choir at West Derby Parish Church. Although Best favoured the fully choral service, it is likely that his interest was in organ playing, rather than the training of the singers.

It is clear that Best had a wide knowledge of church music, which is reflected in the music he composed for the church, which ranged from chants and hymn tunes to elaborate settings for cathedral choirs. He edited hymn tunes, chants, a choral service manual, and adapted plainsong for use in the Anglican liturgy. Although Best's fame as an organist came from his achievements in the concert hall not the church, he did useful work at a time of change and reform in both parish church and cathedral music as a composer and editor of church music.



159. W. T. Best - from a panel in the Choir Vestry of the Priory Church of St. Mary and St. Bega, St. Bees, Cumbria.

CHAPTER 16

W. T. BEST AND ORGAN DESIGN

.....all the organ music of Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn, can be adequately performed on an instrument with two claviers and an ample Pedal-Organ...

(W. T. Best, *First Organ Book* [1883]:6)

The enormous developments which took place in the design of English organs during W. T. Best's formative years were outlined in Chapter 2. The CC compass replaced the old GG compass for both keyboards and pedals. Pedal claviers of 30 or 32 notes were introduced, as were pedal departments of greater size, able to supply an independent bass line. The application of technology, in particular the pneumatic-lever action, made it possible to construct organs of great size, which could incorporate stops on higher wind pressure and also the means for the rapid changing of tone-colour. Throughout his career Best was directly involved in playing instruments which were among the largest and most mechanically advanced in the world.¹ He pioneered a new style of playing and writing for the organ, which would not have been possible without the tonal and mechanical qualities of these newly developed instruments.

It should not, however, be inferred that because he was constantly playing very large instruments, that Best considered that they in any way constituted an ideal. In fact, he made his views very clear in a letter to the Organ Sub-Committee of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, dated 14th May 1879:²

.....I may say at once that I have no admiration for the cumbrous and enormous instruments erected within the last 30 years - which are a source of perpetual trouble and anxiety to the players; while, on the other hand they are a source of substantial income to the makers, though these overgrown monsters cannot be depended upon, as to their decent playing order, from one week to another... (Minutes of the General Committee of the Liverpool Philharmonic society (1876-1881):197)

Best's own organ designs are noteworthy for their economy. In his *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:11) Best outlines a scheme for an instrument of three manuals and pedals with forty-three stops, and in his *First Organ Book* ([1883]:9&10) there is a design for a two manual and pedal organ of fifty-one stops '...upon which all the works of the classical composers for the instrument can be performed...' (Best[1883]:9). Best also designed a one manual and pedal instrument, with stops divided, to draw separately in the treble and the bass, which was built by James Walker. The inspiration behind this design was the small instruments Best had seen on his visit to Italy (MH, January 1890:292).³ In advocating organs of modest size, Best's ideas would seem to be running counter to those generally held at the

time. It is, therefore, of great interest, to consider the ideas of Best, the foremost organist of the century, in relation to all aspects of organ design.

(1) Tonal Design

In his *First Organ Book* ([1883]:3) Best divides the tone obtained from organ pipes into four types – Organ-tone, String-tone, Flute-tone and Reed-tone.

(a) Organ-tone

By 'Organ-tone', Best meant the '...Diapason stops; the Foundation, and Mixture or Harmonic-work...' (Best[1883]:3), the 'Foundation' being the Diapason stops of 32 ft., 16 ft., 8 ft., 4 ft. and 2 ft. pitch, as opposed to the mutation and mixture stops (Best 1853:10).

Of the Open Diapason 8 ft., the basic stop of 'genuine' organ tone, Best remarks that its tone is '...very pleasing and grateful to the ear, and is more frequently used than any other register...' (Best 1853:11). In his design for the organ in Bolton Town Hall,³ Best (1872:12) recommends that the Principal 4 ft. be one pipe smaller than the Open Diapason 8 ft.⁴, and that the Twelfth $2\frac{2}{3}$ ft. and Fifteenth 2 ft. (in the Quint-Mixture of two ranks) be one pipe smaller than the Principal 4 ft. In the same design, Best offers the following comments about the Diapasons of the Pedal Organ:

Pedal "Double Open Diapason of wood, 32 ft.", suitable tone for the principal pedal-basses must be obtained by avoiding the inordinate scales lately in vogue for this portion of an Organ, and providing for the ample windage of the pipes. For the C.C.C. or largest pipe, the size proposed is 18 inches wide, by 20 inches in depth. For the 16 feet note, or C.C.C. pipe, 10 inches by 12.

Pedal "Contra Bass", or Open Diapason, of 16 ft. The remarks above equally apply to this stop. (Best 1872:10)

From this it can be deduced that Best was restrained in his use of pipe-scales for the Diapason stops. He also recommended a modest wind-pressure for these stops, at Bolton Town Hall it was 3¼ inches for the manual flue-work, and 3¾ inches for that on the pedal. Best's aim would appear to have been to produce foundation stops of a refined and musical quality, to which could be added the Mixture and Mutation stops.

Best considered Mixture and Mutation stops to be essential to the design of an organ. He accused organ-builders who could not produce a Twelfth $2\frac{2}{3}$ ft. of '...omitting an essential member of the harmonic series...' and '...dragging the instrument into a quagmire...' (MS, 5th March 1881). In his *First Organ Book* ([1885]:5), Best makes it clear that he understands the importance of adequate Mixture-work in the design of an organ.

.....The Mixture-work, when artistically composed and tempered in its progress through the gamut, constitutes the distinguishing test of a good organ-builder. No other legitimate means exists of adding harmonious power to an Organ: - without stops of this class, the effect of the great works of Bach and other composers is irreparably lost, and the ORGAN at once descends to the low level of a mere museum of imitative stops, while the unique grandeur of its position among musical instruments is totally effaced.....

The composition of several mixtures used by Best in his organ designs have survived.⁵ He almost invariably includes the 'Tierce' (or 17th) rank, but usually only in the lower registers. It is clear that Best regarded this '...important natural harmonic...' as essential, and thought that it '...should always find a place in mixture-stops...' (Best - MS Composition of a 5-rank Cornet, Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES). Best continues by saying that English organ-builders '...never aim at "tempering the harmonics" in various places in the gamut, and say they don't like the 17th, or Tierce; the fact being that the "tierce" doesn't like them...'. As he once remarked: '...all the devil of the organ is in the tierce!...' (Dixon 1940:195). Clutton (1984:33) suggests that Best recommended the Tierce in the tenor and middle registers only as he regarded its purpose as '...to improve the definition of the inner parts in polyphonic passages...', Thistlethwaite (1990:405) pointing out that organ builders may well have questioned the wisdom of retaining tierces in organs tuned to equal temperament. By the end of his life, William Hill had eliminated the rank above the middle of the tenor octave, although Henry Willis continued to use it throughout the compass of the mixtures in his organs.

Composition of a 5 rank Cornet in

the Chorus, or Very-light wind preference.

"First rank", throughout, of unison pitch, but in "stopped metal pipes".

W.T. Best
As 8

Mixture-work requires to be tempered in its progress through the gamut:

thus, the lowest pipes of the "Second" are invariably too loud (i.e. a pipe too large.) The important natural harmonic, the "17th", should always find a place in mixture-stops. - English organ builders never aim at tempering the harmonics in various places in the gamut, and say they don't like the 17th, or Pierce; the fact being that the "terce" doesn't like them.

160. W. T. Best's manuscript design for a "5 rank Cornet"
[Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES]

(Est. Organ.)

Composition of 4 rank "Sesquialtera", always to be used with the Est. organ Double Diapason of "16ft." in addition to the usual stops.

15 17 19 22 25
12 15 19 24
8 10 15
5 8 10

161. W. T. Best's manuscript design for a "4 rank Sesquialtera"
[Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES]

Best often specified an 'Echo Cornet' or 'Echo Dulciana Cornet' in his organ designs.⁶ This he describes as '...although a mixture register, [it] is singularly agreeable to the ear when properly constructed...' (Best 1853:12), and points out that when comprised of six ranks (the lowest being an 8 ft. Stopped Diapason) it '...may be considered a complete organ in itself...' simulating '...with much success the distant effect of a large instrument...' (Best[1883]:12). As Clutton (1984:32) remarked, '...anything, in fact, but a Cornet...'

Best summed his view of the purpose of mixture stops in the following words:

.....It is hardly necessary to remark that all HARMONIC registers, without exception, in the manual and pedal, must be of much smaller scale than any others in the Organ, as their office is merely to add completeness to the general effect, by the actual presence of those faint harmonic tones which invariably accompany any given musical sound..... (Best 1853:12)

The 'Stopped Diapason' Best (1853:9) described as being much softer than the Open Diapason, and possessing '...a flute-like tone...'

Best recognised the suitability of Diapason tone for solo use, and recommended a 'Concert Diapason' on the Solo Organ of his design for the instrument in Bolton Town Hall. He writes that this stop '...must possess the musical quality of tone peculiar to the "Open Diapason" of the old Builders, without having recourse to a large scale, or an undue wind pressure...' (Best 1872:13). The wind-pressure for this stop was to be 5 inches, as opposed to 3¹/₄ inches for the flue-work of the other divisions. In the same scheme Best recommends a 'Violin Diapason' on the Choir Organ, which he describes as being like the '...German Geigen Principal, of bright and pungent tone...' (Best 1872:10).

(b) String-tone

Stops of this type always found a place in Best's organ designs. He seems to have been especially fond of the sound of stops of 'Gamba' quality. In the 1867 rebuild of the organ at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Best recommended the inclusion of three stops of this type in place of some of the mixture-work. He describes the Viola and Viol de Gambe as being of reedy tone, and ideally, of prompt intonation (Best 1872:12&14). The Salcional is described as having a '...full and reedy intonation...', while the Gemshorn has a '...delicate tone...' (Best 1853:11&12). Best regarded the Dulciana as '...one of the finest registers in an organ...' with a '...peculiarly soft and beautiful...' tone (Best 1853:11). The Pedal Violone he thought should have a '...delicate reedy tone...' which could supply a suitable bass '...to the lightest combinations of Manual-tone...' (Best 1872:10).

Best had very strong views about the construction of the 'undulating' stop, the Voix Célestes. It should be of Viol de Gambe pipes, but one pipe smaller than the Viol de Gambe rank that would be drawn with it (Audsley 1905, Vol.i:307&308). It should be tuned a little sharper than the Viol de Gambe rank from 'Gamut G' upwards (Best 1872:14). In a letter to the *Musical Standard* (5th March 1881) Best was insistent that the Voix Célestes should be composed of pipes of 'Gamba' quality and not from Dulciana pipes.

.....The French Voix Céleste, as all conversant with the matter know, is invariably composed of Viol-de-Gambe pipes and not the pale tone of two Dulcianas undulating with each other. A brummagem imitation, so composed has been before the public for some years.....

When properly constructed, this stop should '...impart a tremulous and charming effect to music of an expressive character...' (Best[1883]:11).

(c) Flute-tone

As Best ([1883]:3) was to remark, an organ contains '...numerous modifications of tone modelled on the quality...' of the Flute. He seems to have been particularly fond of flute stops with harmonic pipes.⁷ Although the principle underlying the concept of the harmonic pipe had been known in Europe for centuries (Williams 1966:286), Cavallé-Coll was the first organbuilder to make use of them in their characteristic 19th century form (Thistlethwaite 1990:280). In his design for the organ in Bolton Town Hall Best specifies five 'harmonic' flutes – the Flauto Traverso 4 ft. (with harmonic pipes from middle C¹) and Piccolo 2 ft. (entirely harmonic) on the Choir, the Flûte Octaviante 4 ft. (with harmonic pipes from middle C¹) on the Great, and the Flûte Harmonique 8 ft. and Flûte Octaviante Harmonique 4 ft. (both with harmonic pipes from Tenor C) on the Solo division (Best 1872:11,12&13).

If Cavallé-Coll provided the inspiration for Best's inclusion of harmonic flutes in his Bolton scheme, then it was the German organbuilder, Edmund Schulze, who provided that for the Lieblich Gedackt stops which he recommended for the Choir and Swell divisions of the same scheme.

One interesting feature of many of Best's organ designs is that he often included a flute mutation stop. He specified a Nazard $2\frac{2}{3}$ ft. in the schemes in the *First Organ Book*, Bolton Town Hall, St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow and St. John's, Clayton, and a Tierce $1\frac{3}{5}$ ft. in the *First Organ Book*. Best gives no indication in his writings or in his registration directions as to how he made use of such stops. One can only assume that as he included them in his designs that he would also use them, when they were available, in his playing.

Although Best (1853:11) described the Piccolo as '...the highest flute register in an organ...', he recommended a Tierce, as mentioned above, and also an Octave Flageolet of 1 ft. pitch in the organ he designed for Nathaniel J. Holmes, of The Hall, Primrose Hill, Regent's Park, London.

(d) Reed-tone

As Best wrote ([1883]:3), organ reed stops '...derive their distinguishing quality on the same principle as the Oboe, Clarionet, and Bassoon, viz.. by the rapid vibration of a thin tongue of elastic substance set in motion by the air...'. For the sake of convenience, these organ stops are generally divided into two categories - 'chorus reeds' and 'solo reeds'. Best himself supplied descriptions of several different types of reed stop.

Chorus reeds

The Trombone and Trumpet, both being of 8 ft. pitch have a different tonal character. The Trombone is of wide scale and massive intonation, whereas the 'Trumpet' is thinner with a more piercing quality of tone (Best 1853:12). At Bolton Town Hall he recommends a Harmonic Trumpet, with the harmonic pipes starting at middle C¹ (Best 1872:13). Best regarded the purpose of the Double Trumpet 16 ft. and Clarion 4 ft. as to add '...weight and brilliancy...' to the 'Full Organ' and added that it was '...not customary to use either singly...' (Best 1853:12). At Bolton he directs that the highest twelve pipes of the Clarion 4 ft. should be of 'Viol di Gamba' pipes, of reedy tone, and not of 'Principal' pipes (Best 1872:13). In the same instrument he recommends that the Swell Organ Clarion 4 ft. should be of similar quality to that of the Great Organ, but '...much softer...', and that the Trumpet 8 ft. on the Choir Organ should have its highest octaves of harmonic pipes. It is possible that he expected the latter stop to fulfill a dual rôle - that of 'chorus' reed and 'solo' stops. Other stops which could fall into this category are the Oboe ('...narrow scale and delicate intonation...'), Cornopean and Horn ('...powerful in effect...') and Contra-Fagotto, whose tone is '...in accordance with the orchestral instrument of that name...' and which can be used '...either separately or in combination with the other registers...' (Best 1853:12).

In the Pedal Organ, the Trombone 16 ft. was the '...loudest reed register...', and the Trumpet 8ft. had much effect in '...any striking solo passages in the bass...'. Best saw the importance of reed-tone in a Pedal division, and in his 1861 design for the organ in Wallasey Parish Church, he specified two reed stops (Trombone 16 ft. and Bassoon 8 ft. - both of wood) out of a total of four pedal stops.

Imitative and Solo reeds

At Bolton Town Hall, Best specified that the 'orchestral' reeds on the Solo Organ – the Cor Anglais 8 ft. and the Clarionet and Bassoon 8 ft. should have a tone which was '...imitative of the orchestral instruments so named...' and be enclosed in a separate swell-box (Best 1872:13). They were to be on 5 inches of wind-pressure. The solo reeds on the Swell division were to be on 3³/₄ inches, and comprised Vox Humana 8 ft., Corno di Bassetto 8 ft., Hautbois 8 ft., Trumpet 8 ft. and Clarion 4 ft.. Of the Hautbois he writes that its tone should '...partake of an orchestral character...', and not be merely a '...combination-stop destitute of any individuality of tone...' (Best 1872:14). These stops extended throughout the full 5 octave compass. However, in his design for a chamber organ (Audsley 1905, Vol.i:307&308) Best limits the compass of the Cor Anglais and Clarinet to three octaves from Tenor C, thus approximating more closely to their orchestral counterparts, and underlining the solo nature of the stops concerned. In his *First Organ Book* ([1883]:11) Best describes the Vox Humana stop as being a '...delicately-toned reed stop intended to imitate the singing of a distant choir, rather than the accents of a single voice...'. The Corno Inglese is described in the *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:11) as having a '...loud and penetrating quality of tone similar to the orchestral instrument of that name...'. Best required that the imitative solo reeds of an organ be under expression, and was highly critical of S. S. Wesley for recommending a Solo clavier without a swell-box, in a letter on 'Organ Construction' that he wrote to the *Musical Standard*. Although he does not say so, it is likely that Best was referring, in this letter, to the organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

.....In advancing towards what a recent horn-book terms the 'fancy stops', he [S. S. Wesley] provided a special keyboard with many stacks of pipes without a box to cover them - the corpse-like bleatings of which (under the comprehensive name of 'reeds') were supposed to rival the expressive and varied accents of our chief artists on the clarionet, oboe, horn and other orchestral instruments..... (MS, 5th March 1881)

However, Best advocated that solo reeds of 'Tuba' quality be unenclosed, and put on a much heavier pressure of wind than the other stops of the organ. When the instrument at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, was rebuilt in 1867, Best recommended that the Solo Organ Tubas be on a wind-pressure of 17½ inches in

the bass and 22½ inches in the treble (Clutton & Niland 1963:100). At Bolton Town Hall he recommended a wind-pressure of 10 inches for the solo Tuba, which was double the pressure of the other stops of the Solo Organ, which in itself was on a higher pressure than the remainder of the instrument. This 'Tuba Mirabilis' was to have '...two distinctive qualities of tone...', which were '...From CC to middle e¹ (two octaves and a third, or twenty nine pipes), the tone must resemble an "Ophicleide" of extraordinary power; and from the next note to the top, that of a Concert Trumpet...' (Best 1872:14).

(e) Percussion stops

When he was organist at the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Best played an instrument which possessed percussion stops. William Hill had recorded in his Letterbook (1838-1861, Vol.i:281-4) that the organ was to '...be completed in the best manner, including Drums, triangles &c....'. The final specification (Hopkins & Rimbault 1855:443&444) makes no mention of triangles, but does include 'Drums CC - C' amongst the stops of the Pedal division.⁸

In his designs for the organ at Bolton Town Hall and the residence organ for Nathaniel Holmes Best included a Carillon, which in each case he describes as '...a Gamut of bells [of] 4 ft. pitch...'.⁹ In 1882, when Gray & Davison rebuilt the Handel Festival organ in the Crystal Palace, a three-octave Carillon was added to the Solo Organ (MO, Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:386). It was enclosed in a swell-box, and operated by means of the pneumatic-lever.¹⁰ As solo organist at the Handel Festivals, it is possible that Best was responsible for this addition, especially in view of his recommending the same procedure at Bolton and Regent's Park. Best used the stop during the 1883 Handel Festival '...in a particularly bell-like passage...' in Handel's Organ Concerto No.1 in G minor (Op.4, No.1) (MO, Vol.viii, No.85, 1st October 1884:29), although this was not particularly well received, *Musical Opinion* (Vol.vi, No.70, 1st July 1883:428) regarding the performance as '...a remarkable display of virtuosity rather than as a faithful rendering of the work...'.¹¹

Best's tonal ideas represent a balance between the 'classical' and the 'romantic'. He regarded the provision of 'genuine tone' and mutations and mixtures as essential to the success of any instrument, but also had a liking for the 'harmonic' flutes of Cavallé-Coll, the Lieblich Gedackts of Schulze, stops of the 'Gamba' variety and the newly developed solo reed stops on heavy wind pressure. Although he was to specify 'imitative' reeds, he was fully aware that they had '...no place in the purely organ music of Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, and more modern composers...', and maintained that they held '...an inferior position in the organ builder's art...' (Best 1879:197-200). Best expected such stops to be under expression. In his specifying of a Carillon, it should be remembered that organ percussion stops have a long history, and that J. S. Bach had two tuned 'Zimbelsterne' ('Glockenaccord') on his organ at Arnstadt (Williams 1980:113).

(2) Pipe materials

As Best ([1883]:3) pointed out '...Metal pipes...greatly predominate in every organ...'. He adds that, for the wooden pipes, wood of '...various kinds...' is employed, and for the metal pipes, '...tin, with a slight admixture of lead...'. In his design for Bolton Town Hall metal pipes predominate. Of forty-eight speaking stops, only six are of wood, and two of a combination of wood and metal. This would appear to be the only remaining instance of Best giving details of the composition of the pipe-metal, although he gives no details about the quality and types of timber to be used for the wooden pipes. He writes (1872:9):

No zinc to be employed for any department of the Instrument. The front pipes, comprising part of the 16 feet manual Double Open Diapason and other Great Organ stops, to be made of lamb-stamp tin and pure soft lead, in the proportions of tin 90, and lead 10, in 100 parts.

The interior metal pipe-work to be made of an alloy of 5 ninths lamb-stamp tin, and 4 ninths pure soft lead, as before.....

It is noteworthy that Best specifies that no zinc should be employed in the pipework of this instrument, as it had become a favourite material, especially for large pipes, as it looked well and was easy to work. However, as Sumner (1952, 1st edition:256) points out, it produces a 'hard' sound. Although many different metals have been used in the manufacture of organ pipes over the centuries, either pure tin or a lead-tin alloy called "metal" have proved the best. Silbermann and Cavallé-Coll used alloys of upwards of 95% tin for some of their flue pipes and almost pure tin for display pipes. Best, at Bolton, was recommending 90% tin for the display pipes and c55% for the interior metal pipework. Scientific analysis has shown that an alloy of 50% tin and 50% lead gives the best reinforcement of the first seven harmonics (Sumner 1952, 1st edition:257). It is interesting to compare Best's proportions with those of various organ builders, both English and European:

<i>Builder</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Pipes</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Tin %</i>	<i>Lead %</i>
Cavallé-Coll	c.1870	Front pipes	Blackburn Parish Church	91	9
Cavallé-Coll	c.1870	Inside pipes	Blackburn Parish Church	76	24
E. Schulze	c.1865	Trombone	St. Bartholomew's, Armley, Leeds	56	44
E. Schulze	c.1865	Piccolo	St. Bartholomew's, Armley, Leeds	50	50
H. Willis	1877	Clarion	Durham Cathedral	50	50
T. C. Lewis	c.1890	Diapason	St. Nicholas, Newcastle	47	53

(This analysis was made by Lt.-Col. George Dixon, M.A., and was published in *The Organist and Choirmaster* for 15th January 1909. It is reproduced by Sumner (1952, 1st edition:260))

Foreign organ builders tended to use a higher tin content than the British. In the early years of the 19th century the pipe metal used in English organs was no more than 25% tin, and often less, antimony being used as a hardening agent (Thistlethwaite 1990:40), although Lincoln was reputed to have used 40 to 50% (Hopkins & Rimbault, 3rd edition 1877:98). William Hill used pipework with a high lead content prior to 1855, but thereafter, his mixture of lead and tin was in '...the old-fashioned proportions...' (MW, Vol.xxxiv, 1856:788). In a similar manner, Henry Willis improved the tin content of his pipes in the mid 1860's, especially when money was no object. At the Royal Albert Hall he used 90% tin for the

front-pipes, with the proportion of 5:4 for the internal pipes (Thistlethwaite 1990:436), which corresponds to the proportions recommended by Best for Bolton Town Hall. Best's ideas about the ideal composition of pipe-metal were very much in line with the best organ builders on the Continent and England.

(3) Wind pressures

Although the organ which Best designed for Wallasey Parish Church in 1861 had a light wind-pressure throughout (Whitworth 1945:54&55), he appears to have advocated differing pressures for the flue and reed stops. Cavallé-Coll had done this at St. Denis Abbey in 1841, and the idea had been adopted by Hill in his larger organs (e.g. the Panopticon) and by Willis. At Carlisle Cathedral (1856) Best put the Great. Swell and Pedal reeds on a higher pressure than the flue-work (Clutton 1975:12) and the pressures he recommended for Bolton Town Hall have survived, pencilled, in Best's own hand, into the specification pamphlet. These pressures were:

Flue stops	3 ¹ / ₄ inches.
Reed stops	3 ³ / ₄ inches.
Solo Organ	5 inches.
Tuba	10 inches.
Pedal flue stops	3 ³ / ₄ inches.
Pedal reed stops	4 ¹ / ₄ inches.
	(Best 1872)

From this it can be seen that Best was generally in favour of moderate wind-pressures, slightly higher than William Hill, for example, whose wind-pressure for concert instruments (excluding heavy-pressure reed stops) was about 3 inches (Thistlethwaite 1990:237). Best put his solo division on slightly higher pressure, and reserved heavy wind-pressure for stops of the Tuba class - 10 inches at Bolton Town Hall, and 17½ inches in the treble and 22½ inches in the bass at St. George's

Hall, Liverpool, in the 1867 rebuild under his supervision.

(4) Organ actions

One of the most far-reaching of the developments in 19th century organ technology was that of the pneumatic-lever action, known as the 'Barker Lever', after one of its inventors, Charles Spackman Barker.¹¹ This was combined with the traditional mechanical action to produce a lighter keyboard touch. It made possible the means for rapidly changing stops, and stops on heavy wind-pressure. The development also allowed for the console of an organ to be detached, previously only possible with the very heavy 'long movement' mechanical action.

Although the organ he designed in 1861 for Wallasey Parish Church had mechanical action (Whitworth 1945:54&55), Best seemed to prefer a combination of mechanical action and the pneumatic-lever. This is not surprising as his style of playing relied upon a pianistic approach to the playing of the keyboards, which would not have been as practicable with mechanical action, and the facilities for rapidly changing stops. At Bolton Town Hall Best (1872:8) recommended that the '...pneumatic touch be applied to the Great, Solo, and Swell keyboards, but not to the Choir organ...'. and for the residence organ for Nathaniel Holmes that '...the pneumatic touch is applied to the Great, Swell and Pedal keyboards...' (British Organ Archive). The pneumatic-lever also allowed for Best's preferred method of stop-control and console position.¹²

At St. John's Church, Clayton (1887), because of '...the limited space available...', Best specified the use of tubular pneumatic action throughout the instrument (MO, Vol.x, No.119, 1st August 1887:501). The Echo division of the residence organ for Nathaniel Holmes was placed at the opposite end of the concert room, '...at a distance of 100 feet away from the keyboards...', and was controlled by the '...new electric action...' (British Organ Archive), which had been patented by the builders, Messrs. Bryceson Brothers & Morten. This instrument would, therefore, appear to have had a combination of mechanical, pneumatic-lever and electrical actions.

Although an electrical action was used in this instance, Best had very little time for the idea of a moveable console made possible by such an action. This idea was developed by Robert Hope-Jones who came from '...across the water...' in Birkenhead. Best's reaction to the detached and moveable console of 'Hopeless Jones', as he called him, was to remark that '...he plays his organs at the end of a long rope which ought to be round his neck...', adding that if '...you happen to get run in you can take your console to jail with you...' (Hollins 1937:167). On another occasion he referred to Hope-Jones as an '...impudent charlatan...' and a '...kind of sewer maker between 'pipe' and 'key'...' in a letter to Dr. A. G. Hill.¹³

The development of electric organ actions led to the following amusing letter being published in the *Musical Standard* of February 13th 1869 (Vol.x, No.237:77&78):

ELECTRIFYING: AN IDEA FOR MESSRS. BRYCESON

SIR, - I have been much interested in your accounts of Messrs. Bryceson's wonderful patent, and congratulate them on their invention, which, it seems, enables the player to sit at one end of his church whilst the instrument is at the other.

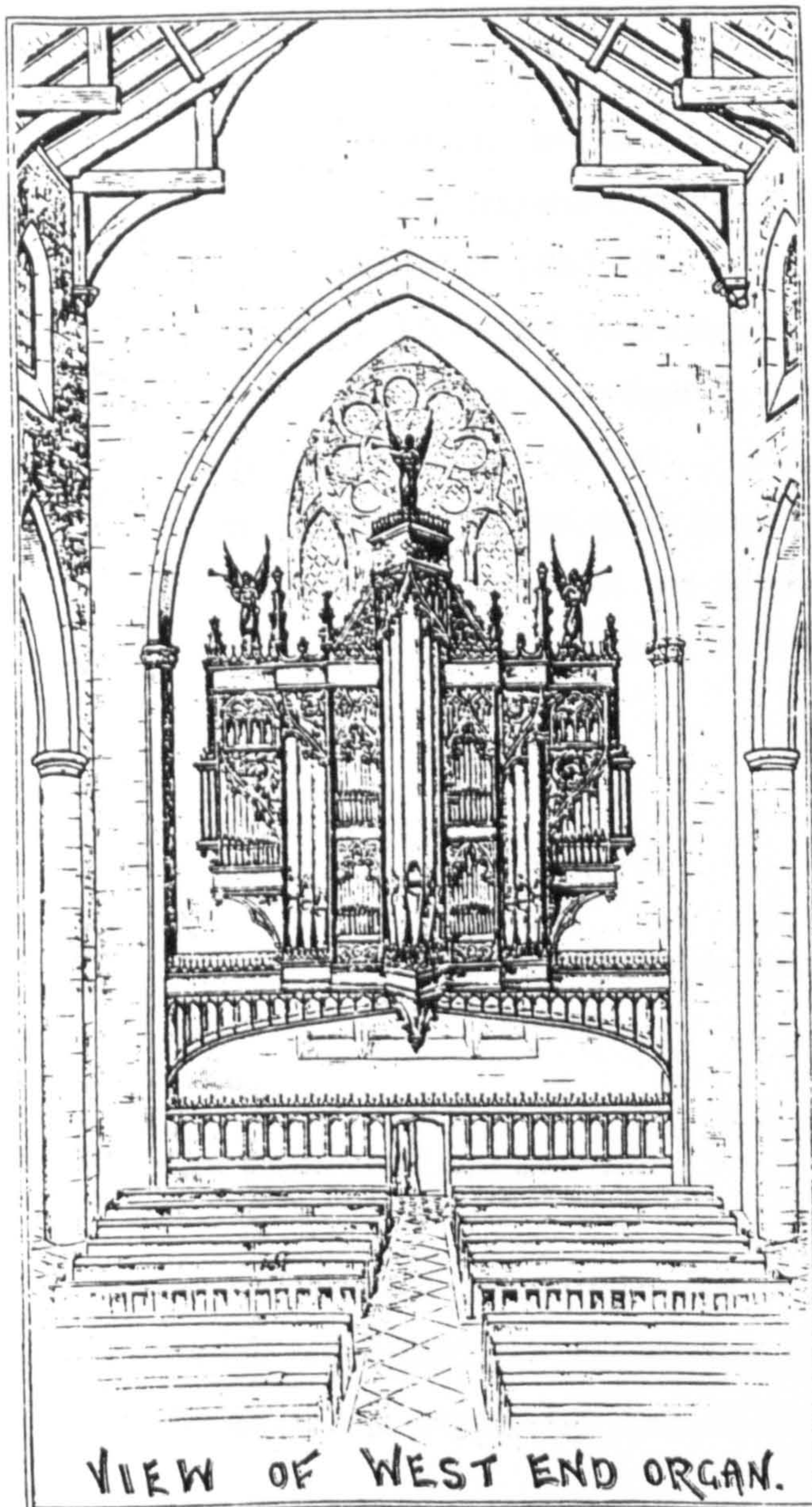
We are badly off here in Plymouth for organs and organists. As to performances like those at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, we know them not. Now, I flatter myself that I've hit upon a good idea: let Messrs. Bryceson erect one of their instruments here, and as "distance is no object" let a cable be laid to the residence of Mr. Best at Liverpool. We can then summon the audience, communicate with Mr. Best by telegraph, and that gentleman can just walk to the manuals erected in his own library or hall, and enchant his Plymouth audience with Bach's G minor fugue, the Hailstone Chorus, etc., etc.!

Yours truly,

TOMMY

Plymouth

It would have been interesting to know Best's reaction to this idea.



VIEW OF WEST END ORGAN.

Telegraphic Address: HOPE-JONES, Birkenhead.

Telephone: 200, Birkenhead.

Works: 51, 55, 57, and 73, Argyle Street,

Offices: 55, Argyle Street,

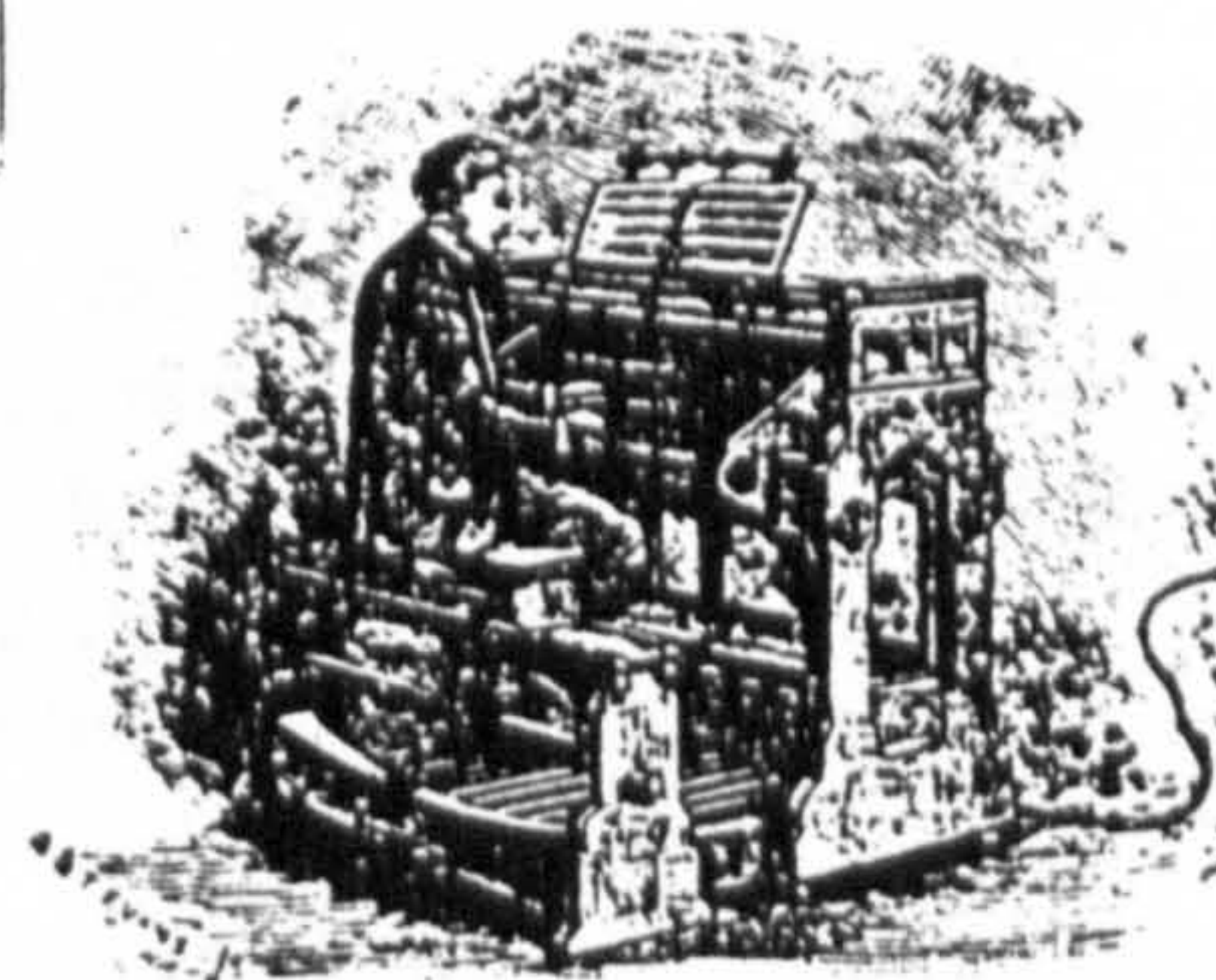
BIRKENHEAD.

**HOPE-
JONES
ELECTRIC
ORGAN
COMPANY,
Limited.**

.....
Correspondence invited.
.....

Managing Director - Robt. Hope-Jones.
M.I.E.E.

Secretary - Arthur W. Speed.



162. Advertisement for the Hope-Jones Electric Organ Company Ltd., showing the
'...organ at the end of a long rope...'

(5) Temperament

As has already been mentioned, Best was a vociferous advocate of the tuning of organs to equal temperament.¹⁴ The organ at the Royal Panopticon had been tuned to equal temperament, and in the 1867 rebuild of the instrument in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Best recommended that it should be retuned to equal temperament (MT, 1st December 1867:231). It was S. S. Wesley who had originally insisted that the Liverpool instrument should be tuned to a form of unequal temperament – what Best described as his [Wesley's] '...insane notion of tuning, or rather untuning the instrument...' (MS, 5th March 1881). Wesley himself was content to have '...some good keys and others bad...' (Sumner 1955:23), which was very much against the spirit of the time (Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* had received its first performance in 1865), and was not acceptable to Best.

(6) Console design

(a) The position of the console

The position of the console favoured by Best was not the one generally adopted by English organbuilders. He insisted that a slightly detached and reversed console was the ideal, and argued his case on both practical and musical grounds:

.....THE CONSOLE.....should be brought some feet from the Organ-case and reversed in position; - the player being seated at such a level, that - in a Church he can see at a glance, and control the singers; and, in a Concert Room he can see the conductor, and be placed conveniently near the Stringed band, and principal Singers in front: so that in Organ Concertos, and passages of Oratorio music with a special organ part, all may go well together..... (Best [1883]:8)

This position he then contrasts with the position usually adopted by organbuilders in this country:

.....THE USUAL POSITION given to the player, even in the largest instruments (though profitable to organ-builders), is perhaps the very worst that could be chosen. Seated within an opening scooped out of the front of the organ case, and ignominiously placed with his back to everyone, the Organist is effectually prevented from judging the various combinations of tone employed; nor can he hear the voices of the Choir at all properly, being in the immediate region of many hundreds of pipes, which, combined together, produce a tumult of sound. Added to this, - in a Church, he does not face the East end; and, in a Concert Room - unlike every other artists - he is obliged to turn his back on the audience; - is perched up at a great height, and seated partially inside the instrument he plays..... (Best[1883]:8)

As the then pointed out, and did so more forcibly in his letter to the Committee of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (15th May 1879, *Minutes 1876-1881:200*) - '...Amateurs of Church Bells would hardly think the "belfry" a suitable place to undergo a peal of 5,700 changes...'.
.

A detached console had been possible with mechanical 'tracker' action, as with the 'long movement' used in the organ for the 1784 Handel Commemoration in Westminster Abbey and at other choral music festivals. At Birmingham Town Hall, William Hill's organ of 1834 had a console 18 feet in front of the case.¹⁵ The practical result of the 'long movement' was to make the touch of the keys very heavy. The development of the pneumatic-lever meant that a console could be detached without increasing the weight of the touch.

In recommending such a position for the console, Best shows a familiarity with, and approval of, the standard console arrangement of the French organbuilder, Cavallé-Coll (Clutton 1975:12), a fact he acknowledges in his 1879 letter to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society:

.....French organ builders invariably bring the keyboards some feet away, to enable the organist to hear the combinations of tone produced, and also "reverse" the position.....
(*Minutes 1876-1881:200*)

In addition to all the other arguments put forward for a detached and reversed console, Best also needed to establish a 'rapport' with his audience,¹⁶ and this was impossible with the position traditionally adopted by English organbuilders.

[original in colour]



163. The typical position of the console on French organs, in this case the 'Orgue du Choeur' at the Church of La Trinité, Paris.

[Photograph: R. D. Tebbet]

In his various organ designs¹⁷ Best put his ideas into practice wherever possible:

(a) Wallasey Parish Church (1861)

'...The instrument stood on the south side of the chancel and had a reversed console...' (Whitworth 1945:54&55).

(b) Bolton Town Hall (1874)

'...The keyboards to be brought fairly away from the front of the case, say, four feet. As circumstances do not allow the advantage to the player of a reversed position, facing the audience, the usual construction of the keyboards will be observed...' (Best 1872:7) – see also Gray & Davison *Shop Book 9 (October 1868–October 1872)*:196 (English Organ Archive).

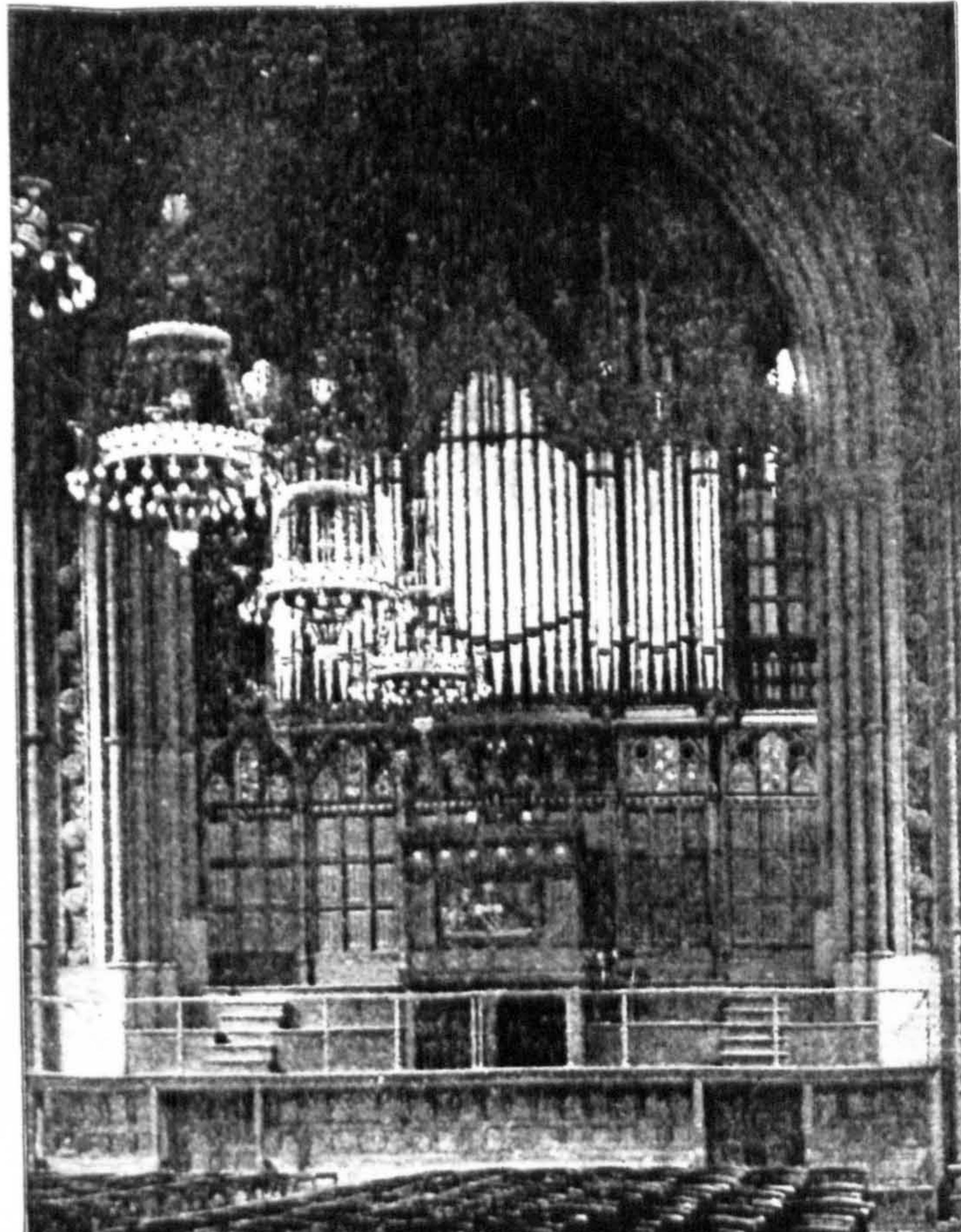
(c) The residence organ for Nathaniel Holmes, the Hall, Primrose Hill, Regent's Park (1875)

'...The keyboards are detached from the Organ itself, and reversed in position, so that the player faces the audience, and is enabled to hear the various effects of tone produced, without difficulty...' (*Description of the great "Regent's Park" Organ* (British Organ Archive)).

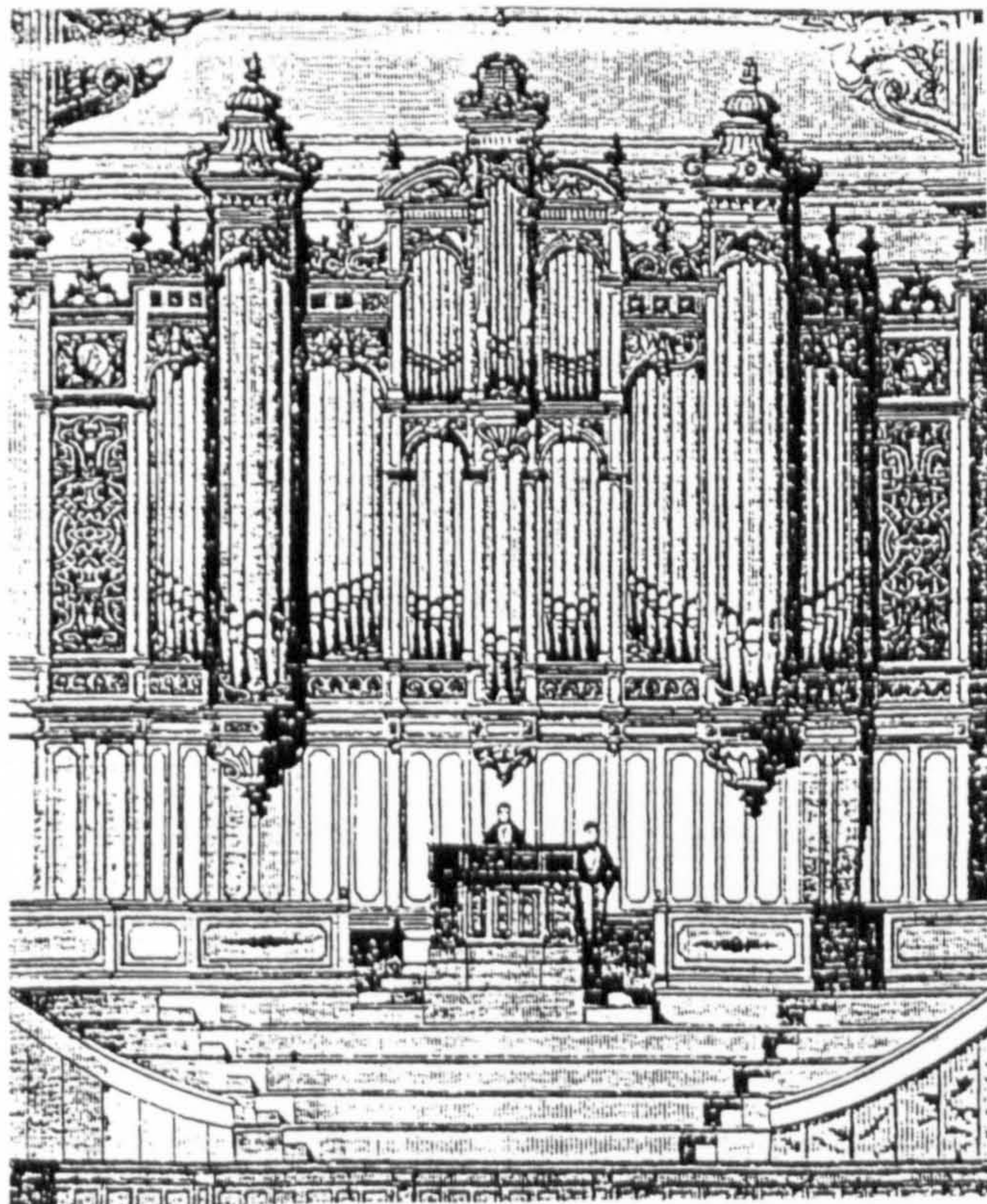
(d) Design for a Chamber Organ (no date)

'...It is recommended that the key-boards be placed at the side of the room, so as to avoid the usual awkward position in front...' (Audsley 1905, Vol.i:307&308)

Best was responsible for recommending that Cavallé-Coll build the organ for Manchester Town Hall (1877–1878), and possibly also for the Victoria Hall in Sheffield, and as was to be expected, both these instruments had the console in a reversed position in the French manner.



164. *The organ in Manchester Town Hall.*



165. *The organ at the Victoria Hall, Sheffield.*

Both illustrations show the position of the detached and reversed console.

(b) The keyboards

Although he described the usual order of the keyboards in his *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:8), Best preferred a different arrangement. He generally, though not invariably, recommended that the Great Organ should be the lowest clavier, a view which reflects French influence.

.....When an organ possesses THREE or more key-boards, it is most convenient to place the Great organ clavier lowest, then the Choir; the Swell third, and the Solo organ highest. By this arrangement, the lighter tones of the Choir and Swell clavier are more available for contrasted use; while the Great organ, with its powerful and grand effects of tone, remains isolated, as it were, beneath the others..... (Best[1883]:6)

As he wrote in the *Musical Herald* (5th March 1881) '...The lighter tones of the Swell and Choir are more readily available for combined use – as in many pieces of modern organ music...'

Best required the keyboards to be placed as close as possible to each other, as '...the seat of the performer remains fixed, and does not adapt itself to the varying distances of the manuals...' (Best 1853:7). This also made it possible for passages to be '...readily played on any two keyboards by the same hand...' (Best 1872:7).

At Bolton Town Hall, Best (1872:7) recommended that the length of the white keys be 5 inches, and that of the black keys, 3 inches.

Although Best was responsible for organs on which the upper keyboard limit was G (Harley Street Chapel, Bow) or A (the residence organ at Regent's Park and the chamber organ design), he was a firm believer in a full 61 note compass (MS, 5th March 1881), which made possible the use of 'super-octave couplers', an idea Best came across in Italy, where the 'terzo mano' '...imparts varied and additional effect in the hands of a skilfull organist, and has the valuable property of rendering many stops of acute pitch entirely unnecessary...' (Best, MO, Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:387).

(c) The Pedalboard

In the early years of the 19th century, if an English organ had any pedals at all, they were likely to begin, as did the keyboards, with the note G. The advocacy of musicians like H. J. Gauntlett resulted in the eventual adoption of the C compass.¹⁸ Some of the excitement inherent in these changes comes through in a letter written by Best to F. G. Edwards (Editor of the *Musical Times*) in 1894:

.....I well remember that we young organ players (at that time) were quite scandalised at the apathy manifested by V[incent] Novello, Th[omas] Adams, B[enjamin] Jacobs and the Wesleys [Samuel and Samuel Sebastian] in giving these works [Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonatas*] a hearing; sheltering themselves by the old "GG" pedal-board, which of course was common to all organists, old and young, then, and only required a new "CC pedal clavier" to replace it and render Bach's, Mendelssohn's, and others' organ work immediately feasible; we, of the younger generation had this speedily done..... (B.L. Eg. 3095)¹⁹

Best favoured the full 32-note pedal-board, to the note G, and specifies this in the design in the *First Organ Book* and for Bolton Town Hall.

Pedal-boards were originally flat and straight, but the middle years of the 19th century saw the development of the radiating and concave pedal-board. Henry Willis credited S. S. Wesley with this development (Sumner 1955:21), but Best had no time for it, and expressed his views in the *Musical Standard* of 5th March 1881:

.....I entirely diapprove of the clumsy apparatus, which makes a pedal-board resemble the bottom of a sailing-boat. A writer in a musical dictionary attempts a silly parallel in comparing the oscillation of 'the bob (!) of a pendulum' with the motion of the feet from right to left. Unless a way of playing the organ in a standing posture has lately been invented, the simile is not worth the bob he names. In all pedal playing, the leg is bent from the knee and then moved backwards and forwards as the passages demand. Under these circumstances, the rise of the feet at each side is a mere nothing: a wiseacre might as aptly supply the 'keyboard' of an eight octave pianoforte in the form of the arc of a circle, and claim honourable mention from a swimming point of view.

As to the principle of 'radiation' - experience has taught me to hold it in light estimation. Passages which frequently occur, requiring a 'crossing of the feet' on the long keys, are rendered almost impossible, and always hazardous, by the diminishing gauge. Unless the pedals radiate very slightly, which is hardly ever the case, I prefer the usual plan.....

Best's thought that slight radiation of a pedal-board was useful as '...the highest and lowest octaves are brought more conveniently within the reach of the performer; - the interval of a *third*, also, can be more easily played by the point and heel of the same foot...' (Best 1853:7). In his design for Bolton Town Hall, Best also allowed for a slight degree of concavity. However, throughout his life, Best would recommend the straight and flat pedal-board.

The exact dimensions of Best's pedal-board for Bolton Town Hall were:

Width across from CCC to g four feet three inches (in front of black keys).

Width across at end of Pedal keys (under the Organ seat) two feet ten inches.

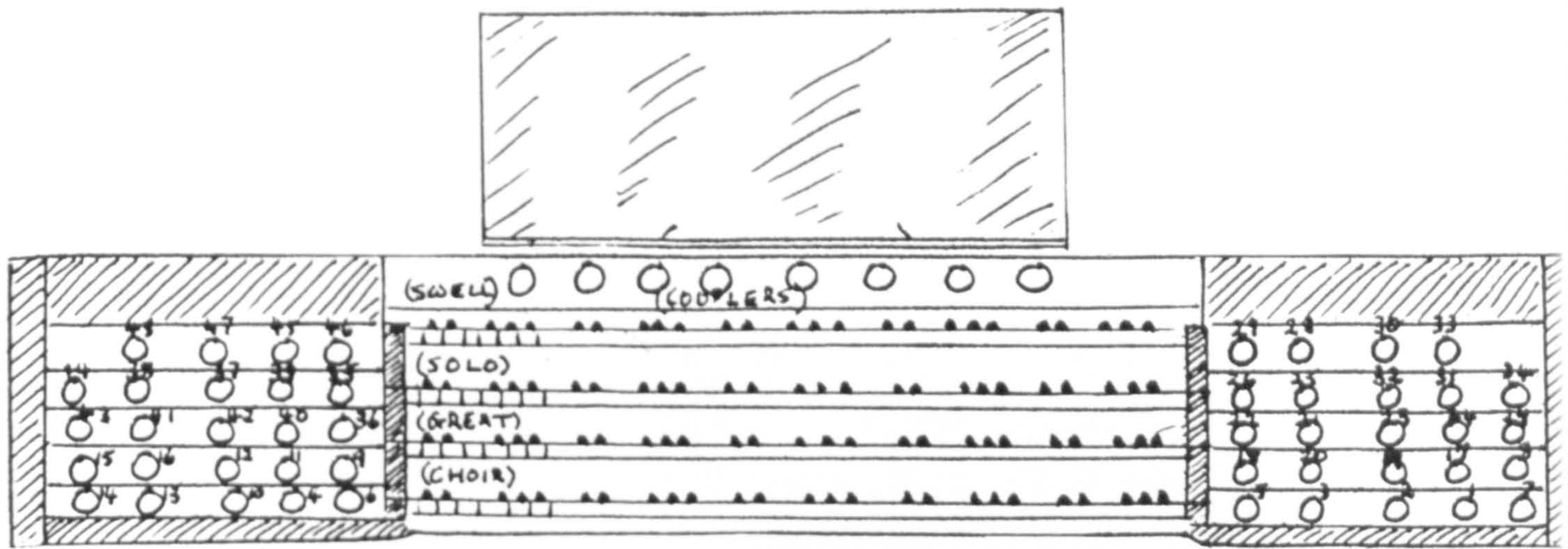
Length of short keys six inches; Length of long keys two feet one inch.

The pedal keys to present a perfectly flat surface to the foot the breadth of each key being one inch. (Best 1872:8)

Best was also in favour of the 'middle D' of the pedals being under 'middle C' of the keyboards (MS, 5th March 1881), and in *Musical Opinion* of 1st June 1892 (Vol.xv, No.177:410) it was reported that '...Mr. W. T. Best now declines to play upon organs in which the builders place "C under C", on account of the difficulty in reaching the higher notes of the pedal range with any certainty, the board being planted too far to the right for a convenient performance of organ compositions...'. .

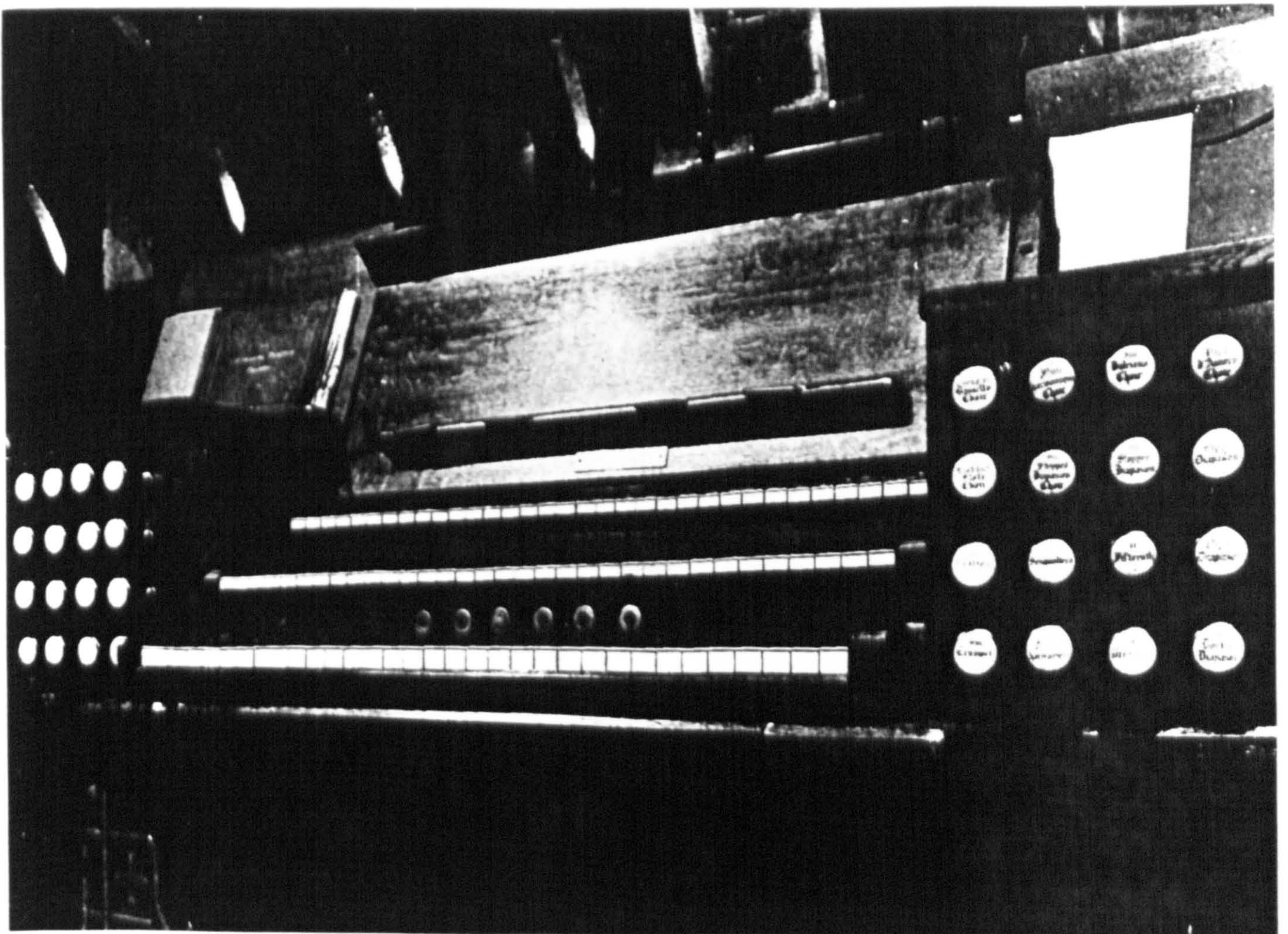
(d) The position of the stop-handles on the console

Best's ideas in this area also reflect the influence of Cavallé-Coll. He required that the stop-handles to be in terraces on either side of the keyboards '...to be within immediate reach of either hand...' (Best 1872:8), and not ascending above the level of the uppermost clavier. Couplers were to be placed above the top keyboard. A console of this design would resemble those by Cavallé-Coll, and also those of the young Henry Willis, like that at King's College in the Strand (1854).



[R. D. Tebbet]

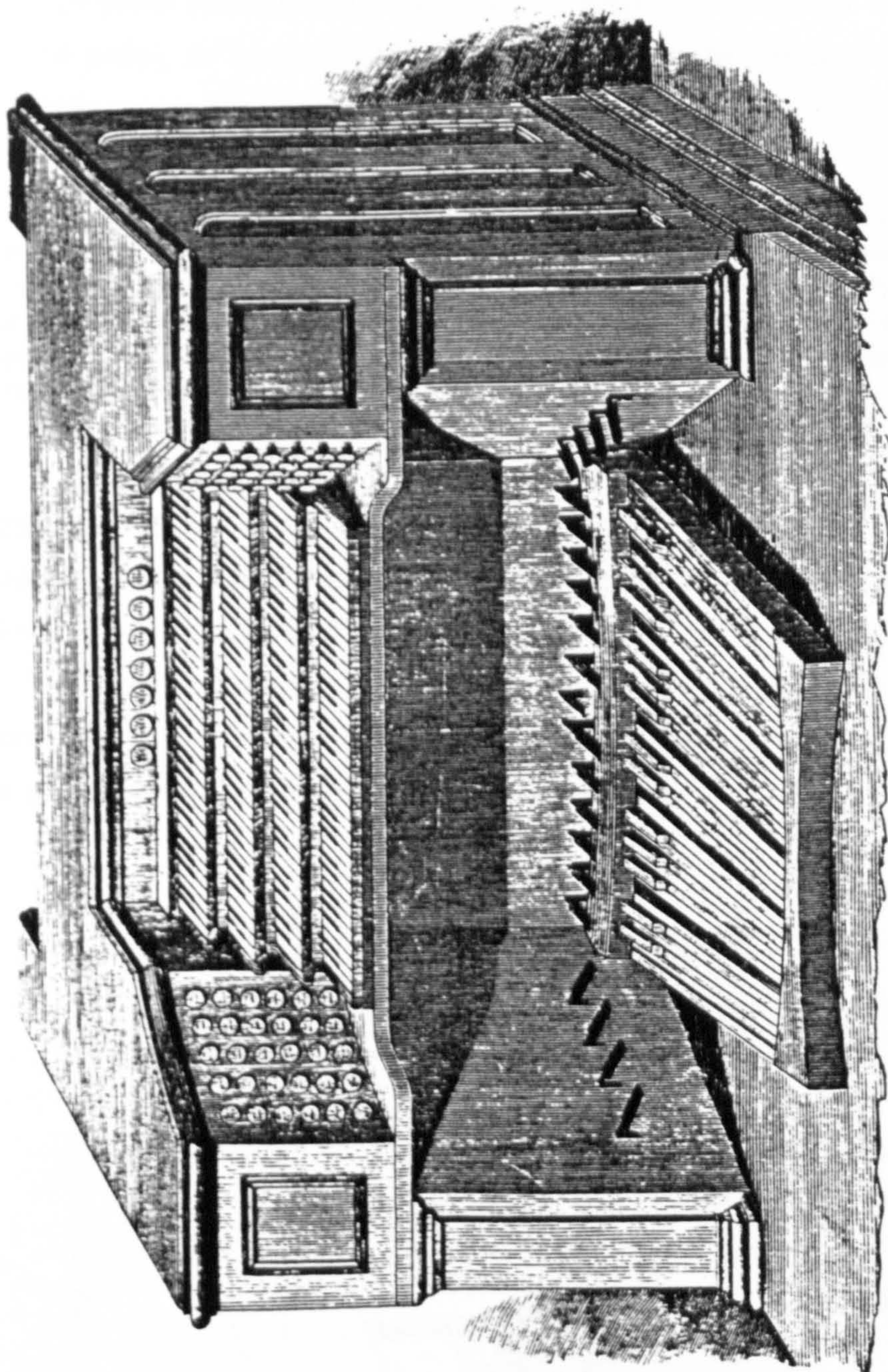
Fig.3 This diagram is a re-construction from notes pencilled, probably by Best himself in the 'Specification for proposed organ in the Town Hall, Bolton' (April 1872).



166. The console of the organ in the King's College, the Strand, London. Henry Willis (1854).



167. A typical organ console by Cavallé-Coll - that of the organ in the Victoria Hall, Sheffield. Best gave the opening recital on this instrument.



VIEW OF THE CONSOLE OF A LARGE ORGAN WITH FOUR MANUALS AND PEDAL-BOARD, SHEWING THE POSITION OF THE STOPS, COUPLERS, COMBINATION AND CRESCENDO PEDALS.

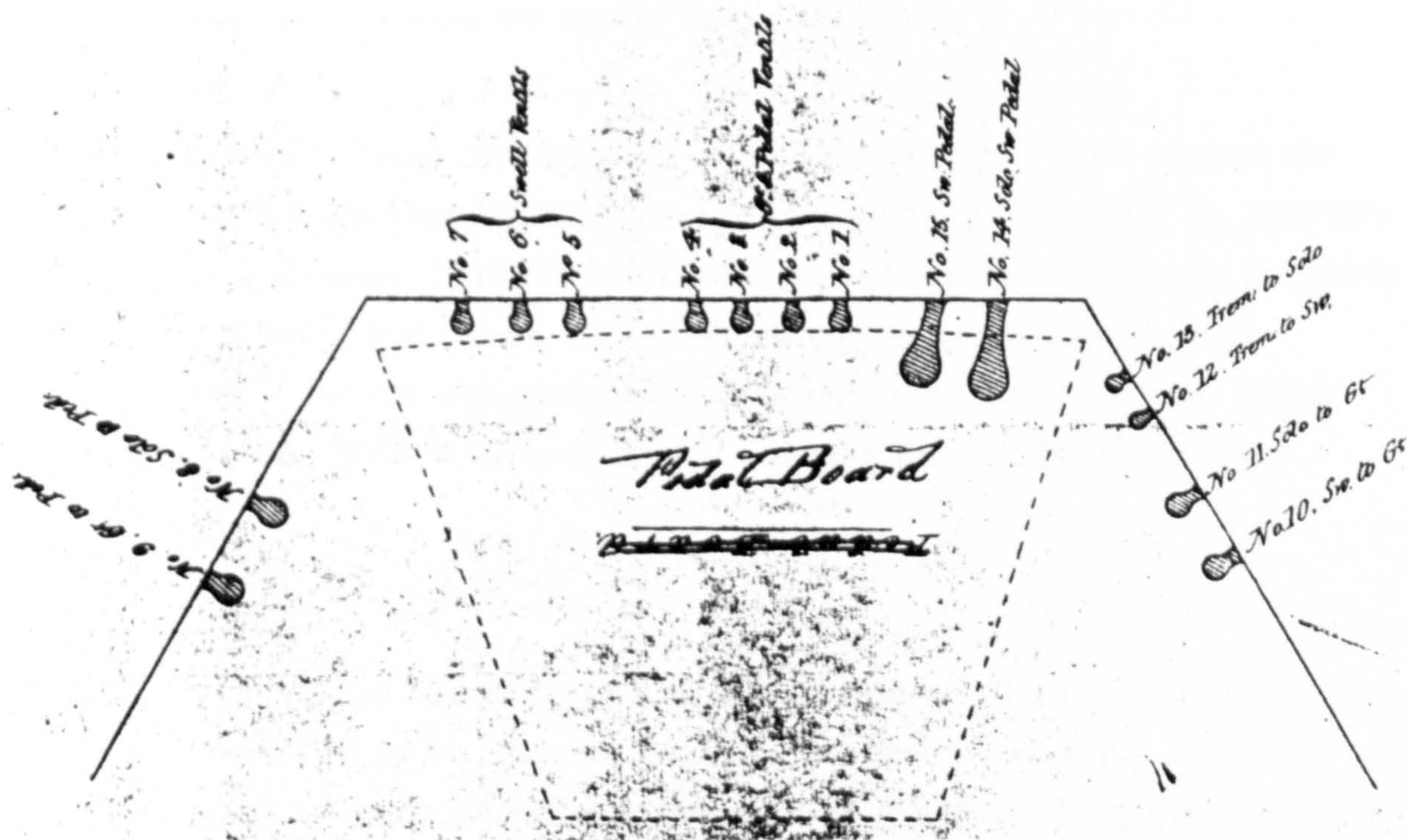
168. The illustration of an organ console from Best's 'First Organ Book' [Boosey]

(e) The position of the Swell Pedal

Although the organ which he designed for Wallasey Parish Church (1861) had a lever swell pedal (Whitworth 1945:54&55), Best was in favour of a centrally placed, balanced pedal, as he makes clear in his letter to the *Musical Standard* of 5th March 1881:

.....I wish to urge one or two points for consideration.....The removal of the swell-pedal to a central position, thus rescuing the players's right foot from the gouty eminence where it has long been hanging as an awful example to its rinking brother, the left foot, always busy with the very abysses of sound. This alteration of course means a conveniently shaped swell-pedal, poised on an axis, and stationary whenever desired so as to utilise every shade of tone in use at the moment.....

Best put this into practice in his various organ designs. St. John's, Clayton, the Holmes residence organ and the chamber organ scheme all had a centrally placed pedal.²⁰ However, Best seems to have deviated slightly from this position at Bolton Town Hall. The two diagrams in the *Specification of proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton* (1872:17&opposite) show the Swell and Solo expression pedals to the right of the pedal-board (see below).



169. W. T. Best - 'Specification of proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton' [April 1872] - page 17, showing the diagram with the position of the swell pedal.

(f) Stop control

As organs grew in size during the 19th century, it became necessary to provide them with the means of rapidly changing from one combination of stops to another. Traditionally this had been done by means of Composition Pedals, which threw out a fixed combination of stops by mechanical means '...so that the necessity of drawing the registers by *hand* is avoided...', with the combinations of stops generally being in the following order, '...first, *p*, second, *mf*, third, *f*, fourth, *ff*...' (Best 1853:15). The invention of the pneumatic-lever gave an impetus to the development of new means of stop control. Among these were Thumb Pistons, invented by Henry Willis, and incorporated in the instrument he built for the Great Exhibition of 1851. The *London Journal* (Vol.xxxix, 1852:199-200) furnished the following description:

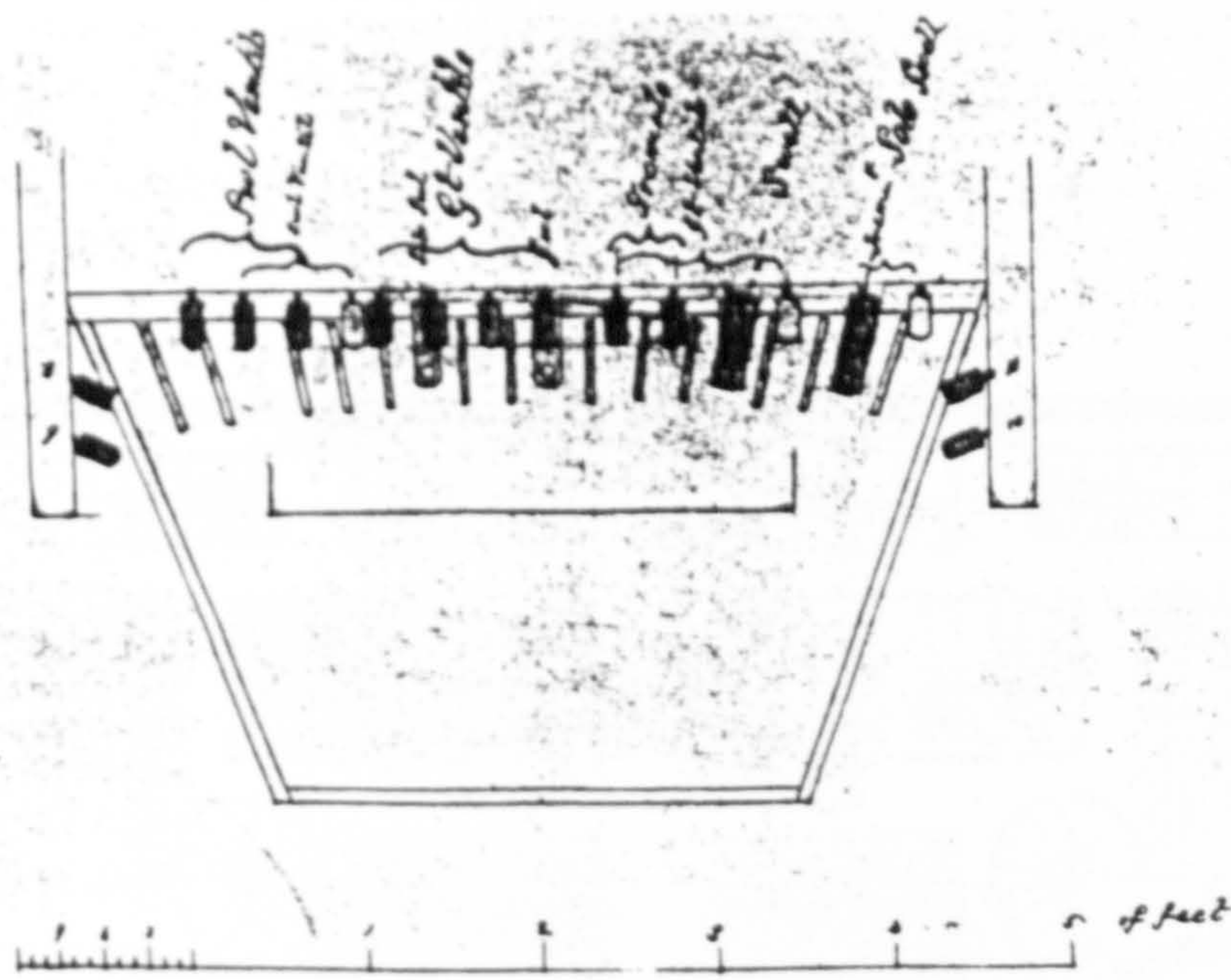
.....The principal novelty in this organ is a contrivance for acting on the draw-stops, intended to supersede the composition pedals. On the key slip, which is of brass, immediately below each clavier, project a number of small studs which corresponds to, and is labelled with, a certain combination of stops belonging to the clavier adjoining; when the hands are upon the keys, these studs, lying directly below, can be touched easily with the thumbs, and when any one of them is slightly pushed in, in this manner, it draws the combination of stops to which it corresponds, in the same manner as the composition pedals.....In most cases there is a duplicate stud for each combination, so that it may be obtained by using either the right or the left hand.....

Willis incorporated Thumb Pistons, with a further refinement which allowed the combinations of stops they controlled to be changed, in his organ for St. George's Hall, Liverpool (Sumner 1955:23). Although Best played this instrument for thirty-nine years, he had a low opinion of Thumb Pistons, and described them as '...'gilded knobs' for the seduction of the organist's thumbs...' (MS, 5th March 1881) and '...little Willis's damn tricks for seducing the thumbs...' (Hollins 1936:166).

Best preferred the ventil system of stop control. This system, which was used by Cavallé-Coll in his instruments, was a method of supplying or cutting off the wind supply to stops without affecting the stop-handles. They were generally operated by means of foot pedals.

.....It is also very desirable that the Combination Pedals (which should be of small dimensions and invariably "fasten down" when used), should act directly and silently upon the wind itself, instead of causing the stop-handles to fly perpetually backwards and forwards with a clattering noise..... (Best[1883]:8)

Where possible, Best incorporated the ventril system of stop-control in organs he designed.²¹ He describes the ventils to be inserted into the Organ in Bolton Town Hall,²² and also includes diagrams showing the position of the ventril pedals (see below). Rather surprisingly, stop-control on the Holmes residence organ was by means of Combination Pedals and Thumb Pistons '...of a new construction...' (British Organ Archive).



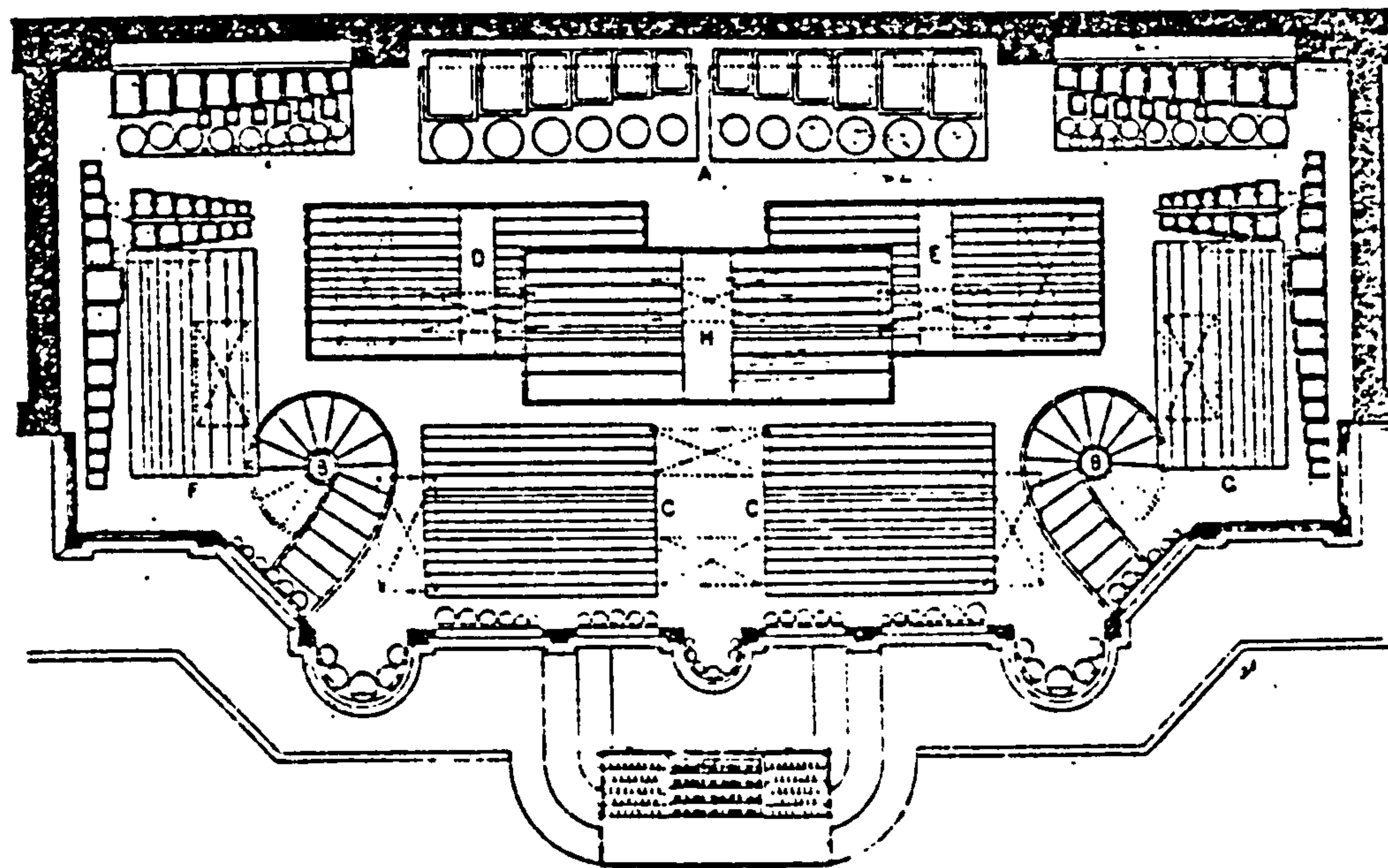
170. W. T. Best - 'Specification of Proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton' [April 1872] - opposite page 17, showing the position of the ventril pedals.

In his organ designs Best directed that the Tremulants be brought into operation by pedals.²³ He also preferred the couplers to be operated by hitch-down pedals rather than by stop-handles.²⁴

In advocating a console design and method of stop-control similar to those of the French organ-builder Cavallé-Coll, Best was at a variance with what was standard in England at the time. His reasons for preferring such a design had their origins in purely musical considerations, and were concerned with the ease of playing and controlling the instrument. This type of console never found widespread popularity in this country, and that for the Holmes residence organ at Regent's Park proved difficult for players who were not used to the continental style. As Arthur Fagge (1940:2) observed:

.....all the mechanical coupling and many other things were relegated to very narrow pedals, of which there was a large collection in the fore board, unlabelled and thoroughly mixed. Result - no one could play this monster organ without practising for hours beforehand.

Only one man took the trouble to learn what there was to be learnt. That was Lemmens. And Best and he had many a scrap on the subject.....



*171. The Cavallé-Coll organ in the Victoria Hall, Sheffield.
Diagram showing the position of the console in relation to the instrument.*

(7) W. T. Best as Organ Designer²⁵

When considering Best as a designer of organs, it is often difficult to determine the exact rôle that he played in certain circumstances. The often-used phrase 'under the superintendence of W. T. Best' is ambiguous. It is possible that he was retained by the purchaser to recommend a builder from the various tenders and schemes submitted, as would appear to have been the situation at Manchester Town Hall, or that he was brought in to 'pass' the finished instrument as being mechanically and tonally satisfactory, as was probably the case at the Royal Albert Hall. Best would appear to have had a low opinion of competitive tendering for the contract to build an organ. He writes contemptuously of '...that essentially English product - the competitive or Churchwarden's organ...', and described it as '...an erection which has long excited the admiration of parish undertakers, being set up in a convenient manner for impending dissolution, a fate which sooner or later overtakes it after undergoing frequent doctorings of an expensive kind...' (MS, 5th March 1881).

Certain schemes - the 'abstract' designs in the *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:11), the *First Organ Book* ([1883]:8&9), the chamber organ (Audsley 1905, Vol.i:307&308) and the best documented of all his designs, for Bolton Town Hall²⁶ - reveal the features that Best considered essential in organ design and construction.

1. Best's designs were modest in size, particularly when compared with the 'monster' instruments of the time, such as those at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, the Royal Albert Hall, London, and the Town Hall, Sydney - instruments with which Best was involved professionally as a player.
2. Best adapted each design to suit the purpose for which the instrument was intended, and would differentiate between instruments intended for churches and concert halls.²⁷ For the one-manual organ at New Brighton Wesleyan Church he specified that the stops be divided, after the manner of the instruments he had seen in Italy, in order to improve the versatility of the instrument.

3. Where possible, the console was to be slightly detached and reversed in position, with the stop-handles in terraces which did not ascend above the level of the uppermost keyboard. Stop control was to be by means of vented pedals, with a centrally-placed balanced expression-pedal for the enclosed division(s).
4. The organ action was a mixture of mechanical and the pneumatic-lever. Other types, such as tubular-pneumatic or electric actions, were only employed where circumstances left no alternative.
5. Wind pressures were to be moderate, with the reed stops on a higher pressure than the flue stops. The Solo division was to be on a higher pressure, while stops of the Tuba variety alone were on heavy pressure.
6. Tonally, the instruments represent a fusion of genuine 'organ tone' (Diapason) with mixture-work, flutes (including harmonic flutes) and mutations, the more 'romantic' colours such as the Viola and Voix Célestes and solo stops, which included imitative reeds and stops of the Tuba variety on heavy wind-pressure. Best insisted on an adequate pedal division, which was capable of sustaining an independent pedal part and also capable of underpinning the quietest stops of the instrument.

The organ designed for Bolton Town Hall²⁸ would seem to represent Best's ideal of an organ. Clutton (1975:11) claims that Best had '...a highly Classical view of the organ;...as to its tonal and mechanical layout...', but it would be more accurate to define his view 'Classical-Romantic'. The Bolton organ, which was modest in size (48 stops spread over four manuals and pedal), represented a fusion of 'Classical' and 'Romantic' elements which could be compared with the organs of Cavallé-Coll in France. Thistlethwaite (1990:347&348) while admitting that it was '...a wonderful vehicle for virtuosic display...', saw it as accurately reflecting '...both the strengths and weaknesses of the course which the concert organ was taking in the third quarter of the 19th century...'

Clutton (1984:33) suggests that Best may have had a hand in the design of the 'Grove' organ, which has been described as the '...first fully developed English romantic organ and one which has seldom if ever been surpassed in that capacity...' (Clutton & Niland 1963:106). This organ was built by the short-lived firm of Michell & Thynne and displayed at the Inventions Exhibition in 1885. In 1886 it was exhibited at a similar event at Liverpool, where it was certainly played by Best (Harrison nd:16).

Best's organ designs at Bolton and elsewhere reveal that he developed a more versatile 'Classic-Romantic' organ than did Michell and Thynne, and at an earlier date. The Bolton Town Hall design, in particular, shows the English 19th century organ at its best. Best's designs, do not appear to have had a widespread influence, and the general trend in English organ-building in the late 19th century was towards larger instruments with electric or tubular pneumatic actions, the reduction or complete abandonment of mixture stops and mutations, and the raising of wind-pressures, culminated in the organs built by Robert Hope-Jones.

Thistlethwaite (1990:348) saw Best's Bolton Town Hall scheme as containing '...the seeds of future decadence...'. This organ may well have '...allowed the skilful executant to perform transcriptions...' (Thistlethwaite 1990:347), but was also suited to the performance of the legitimate organ repertoire. Best cannot be blamed for the ideas of Hope-Jones and others, which resulted in organs being built which were not.



172. The Organ in Bolton Town Hall.

Specification
of proposed
Organ for the Town Hall
Bolton

April, 1872.

W. T. Best.

173. Title-page of W. T. Best's 'Specification of proposed Organ for the Town Hall, Bolton'. April 1872.

[from microfilm supplied by the late Cecil Clutton Esq.]

(8) W. T. Best and the Organ Builders

As a recitalist Best came across the work of all the important organ builders of his time, and collaborated with many of them in the design of new instruments. Bryceson Brothers built the organs in St. John's Hall, Penzance, the Brighton Concert Hall, and the residence organ for Nathaniel Holmes. Gray & Davison were responsible for building the instrument that was probably Best's 'ideal' organ at Bolton Town Hall. An entry in the ledger belonging to the firm of J. W. Walker & Sons²⁹ Ltd. reveals the fact that in 1884 Best was paid the sum of £1-11s-6d (£1-57½p) for examining and reporting on the organ in Birkenhead School, and it was Joseph Walker who built Best's one-manual design for New Brighton Wesleyan Church. Best was obviously impressed by the work of Edmund Schulze; after playing the organ in St. Bartholomew's Church at Armley, Leeds, he remarked '...You draw a stop labelled 'Mixture' in a German instrument, and it colours the whole organ like a flash of lightning...' (Clutton & Dixon 1950:81). Best wrote testimonials for August Gern (who had been foreman to Cavallé-Coll in Paris) and Thomas Casson (who had been a banker) which were published in the musical press.³⁰

In his letter to the Organ Committee of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society of 15th May 1879 (*Minutes 1876-1881:200*)³¹ he reveals the names of the organ builders that he admired most:

.....The builders of the first rank, who have a reputation for producing "organ tone" of high excellence are:-

1st.	Cavallé-Coll	Paris
2nd.	Lewis & Co.	London
3rd.	Hill & Son	London

The two first-named command high prices for all work, but their instruments are so artistically made, in every detail, that the frequent and annoying item of cost for "repairs", every few years, is practically unknown. Cavallé-Coll's finest organs, in this country, are:-

Manchester Town Hall	(£3,500)
Albert Hall, Sheffield	(6,000)
Blackburn Parish Church	(2,500)

1884		1884		1884		1884				
By Cash	25	Aug 27	To Examining & Reporting upon organ in Birkenhead School, including journey Cab & hire etc. - of 24/1/84	1	11	6	Dec 2	1	11	6
By Cash	30									
By Cash	3 13 6									
1886		1886		1886		1886				
By Cash	3 13 6	Oct 25	To Supplying & Look for organ to pattern 12. Key - - - - - of 24 - 25/10/86		3	6	Nov 2		3	7
1887		1887		1887		1887				
By Cash	26 8	April 12	To Fixing Chamber Organ in Auction Room in, Leediness for sale - of 12 1/2 of 11/1/87	1	1	April 26	1	1		
1886		1886		1887		1887				
By Cash	2 6 5	Dec	To Supplying a 2 nd hand Organ for a green int. - of 4/1/87 - of 1/1/87	15		May 21	15			
1889		1889		1889		1889				
By Cash	2 5	Feb 26	To Colls. of organ attendance of Flowers at Exeter Hall for meeting at 3. 15. P.M. of 24/1/89	2	12	6	Mar 18	2	12	6

174. Archives of J. W. Walker & Sons Ltd. - entry in the ledger for 1884.

Lewis & Co.'s organs-

Ripon Cathedral	(£3,000)
Glasgow Public Hall	(5,000)

Hill and Son -

Ulster Hall, Belfast	(£4,000)
Birmingham Town Hall	(5,000)

Best had come across William Hill's work early in his career when he was at the Royal Panopticon, and Thistlethwaite (1990:346) sees the influence of Hill in Best's specification included in the *Modern School for the Organ* (1853:11). The performances which Best gave in Sydney, which crowned his career as an international recitalist, was on the huge instrument built by Hill's successors.

It was after Best's performance on the organ, built by T. C. Lewis, that he and Henry Smart had designed for St. Andrew's Hall in Glasgow, that Hans von Bülow made complimentary remarks about his playing.³² Best revealed his views about Lewis in a letter, dated 18th March 1886:

95, Upper Parliament St.
Liverpool, Mar. 18, 1886

Mr. Best is obliged to reply in the third person to the enclosed letter as the signature is without a Christian name, to show the sex of the writer. As to Mr. Lewis's abilities as an organ builder, Mr. Best has the highest opinion of his talent and the great amount of pure organ-tonr he always obtains from a comparatively small number of stops.

Although Mr. Lewis's scale of charges may appear greatly in advance of other organ builders the money is prudently spent, as every detail of Lewis's organs is of the highest excellence and intended to last long without the recurring bill of repairs, common to many cheaper instruments of the "competitive" class.

(From the private library of Wm. Neville Blakey Esq., reproduced by permission)

Best's advocacy of the organs of Cavallé-Coll is of especial interest. Best's concept of console design and stop control were obviously heavily influenced by the French organ builder. Best's tonal design for Bolton Town Hall would appear to be the equivalent in English terms of Cavallé-Coll's work - a fusion of the 'classical' and 'romantic' concepts of the instrument, expressed within the terms of a national tradition. His recommending that Cavallé-Coll build the instrument for Manchester Town Hall (1877/78), means that he must have had first-hand experience of the that builder's organs, which could, of course have been gained from that in the Albert Hall, Sheffield (1873) which Best opened, and the instrument (1871) at Ketton Hall³³, which was played by Best, and among others Widor, Saint-Saëns and Guilmant.

It would be interesting to discover at what point in his career Best first came across the organs of Cavallé-Coll. The *Musical Herald* (January 1890:292) stated that '...Mr. Best has frequently played in the churches of Paris...', but his acquaintance with the work of the French builder may have begun early in his career. In the 1840's Best took lessons in Liverpool from John Richardson who was organist of St. Nicholas' Church, Copperas Hill, which was the Roman Catholic pro-cathedral of the city (Mansfield 1918:213). Douglass (1980:99) has a representative list of the pedal compasses of Cavallé-Coll organs from 1850 and earlier, and which includes the following entry:

[Date]	[Place]	[Pedal Compass]	[Sources]
1847	Liverpool Cathedral	31 notes, C to F (F#?)	Devis I, #298

As there was no Anglican cathedral in Liverpool at the time, this could well refer to St. Nicholas' Church, Copperas Hill. The pedal-board has a full compass, beginning at C, and John Richardson '...was said to have been an ardent advocate of the CC pedal board (Mansfield 1918:213), so it may have been the case that Best came across Cavallé-Coll's work early in his career, and in his adopted city of Liverpool.

Cavaillé-Coll, described as having '...the most advanced mind and technique of any [organ] builder of the day...' (Williams 1966:201) had a profound influence on organ building in England. William Hill visited Cavaillé-Coll's workshop in Paris in the 1840's (Douglass 1980:225&226), as did Henry Willis (Sumner 1955:16). Cavaillé-Coll influenced organ builders as diverse as Davison and Lewis, but perhaps the greatest influence was on Henry Willis. This influence reached its zenith in the instruments he built for the Royal Albert Hall (1871) and the Alexandra Palace (1875). Sumner (1955:33&34) has pointed out the similarity between Willis's Great Organ for the Royal Albert Hall and the combined Grand Orgue and Grand Choeur of Cavaillé-Coll's organ at St. Sulpice, Paris (1862).

As Thistlethwaite (1990:434) states '...Willis could claim pre-eminence among English builders as a constructor of concert organs...', and although an eminent organ builder, he is not mentioned by Best in his letter to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (15th May 1879, *Minutes 1876-1881*:197-200). Early in his career, Best would appear to have been on good terms with Willis – he played his organ at the Great Exhibition of 1851³⁴ and described the organ for St. George's Hall, Liverpool, as '...a masterpiece both musically and mechanically...' (MW, Vol.xxxiii, No.32, 11th August 1855:522). As Thistlethwaite (1990:345) points out, at Liverpool, Willis built an organ which directly influenced Best's success as a player:

.....he [Willis] provided him [Best] with an instrument in which the natural resistance of key and pedal actions when associated with large soundboards was overcome by pneumatic agency, and then he applied the same means to increasing vastly the registrational possibilities of his 100-stop instrument by providing six thumb pistons to each department and six general pistons to act on the whole organ. Pneumatics to assist the motion of the swell shutters, together with various forms of relief pallet.....

Willis was responsible for building organs to Best's design at Carlisle Cathedral (1856), Wallasey Parish Church (1861) and for the rebuild, under Best's direction at St. George's Hall, Liverpool in 1867.

At some point Best and Willis had a disagreement. Levien (1942:44) acknowledges this, but offers no opinion as to the cause. Harrison (nd 12&13) and Carrington (1981:17) suggest that it was over the organ in the Royal Albert Hall. This is certainly possible, as at a meeting of the Royal Albert Hall Organ Committee, held probably in December 1871, a report was read '...from Mr. Best upon certain points which in his opinion were capable of improvement...' (Archives of the Royal Albert Hall). Best is reputed to have said harsh things about this organ, including the comment that the solo stops were on such high wind-pressure that they had to be chained to the wind-chest (Haddon:484). Sumner (1955:25) suggests that the rift came about because Willis refused to pay Best a secret commission on a new instrument. Others have ascribed the quarrel to comments that the two men made to each other. H. C. Tonkin suggested that,

.....the last straw was broken when Willis said to Best that he could *build* and *play* an organ, which was more than Best could do..... (Mansfield 1918:228)

and William Faulkes that,

.....they [Best and Willis] were sitting together in a railway carriage when a nearby engine let off a piercing whistle. Best turned to Willis [and] said "Do you know what that reminds me of? A Willis flute..... (Harrison nd:13)

A more practical result of the quarrel was that the maintenance and tuning of the St. George's Hall organ was placed in the hands of Messrs. Lewis (Harrison nd:12, Sumner 1955:25, Carrington 1981:17). Comments, like the following, made in his letter to the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (15th May 1879, *Minutes 1876-1881:197*), are probably a thinly veiled reference to Willis's organ at St. George's Hall:

.....those cumbrous and enormous instruments erected within the last thirty years.....which are a source of perpetual trouble and anxiety to the players; - while, on the other hand, they are a source of substantial income to the makers, though these overgrown monsters cannot be depended upon, as to their decent playing order, from one week to another.....

This would appear to have been the case at Best's first recital at St. George's Hall.

after his return from Italy:

.....Unfortunately the whole of the recital was marred by persistent cypherings, &c., which must have been as excessively annoying to the player on his first reappearance as they were disagreeable and irritating to the interested listeners..... (MO, Vol.v, No.58, 1st July 1882:387)

Best was to continue to make derogatory comments about Willis and his work throughout the remainder of his life, and latterly he refused to play on any organ built by Willis (Sumner 1955:25), with the exception, of course, of that in St. George's Hall.

Best reserved his most caustic remarks for Robert Hope-Jones and his work. Hope-Jones has been variously described as '...a sort of *fin-de-siècle éminence grise*...' (Clutton & Niland 1963:106) who built '...the worst organs ever made by a careful, professional builder...' (Williams 1980:182). Hope-Jones, more than any other builder, contributed to the decline of the organ at the end of the century, and which continued into the present century. His contribution to the art of organ building lies in two directions: the development of an electric key action which allowed the console to be detached and moveable, and the production of an extreme type of tone which was characterised by a smoothing out of acoustic 'interest'. Hope-Jones's organ for Worcester Cathedral (1896) had only three stops of 2 ft. and no mixture-work or mutations, in a 4-manual organ of fifty-five speaking stops. Best would variously refer to him as 'hopeless Jones' (Hollins:167) and referred to '...that impudent charlatan's doings at Worcester...' (letter to Dr. A. G. Hill), and continued scathingly:

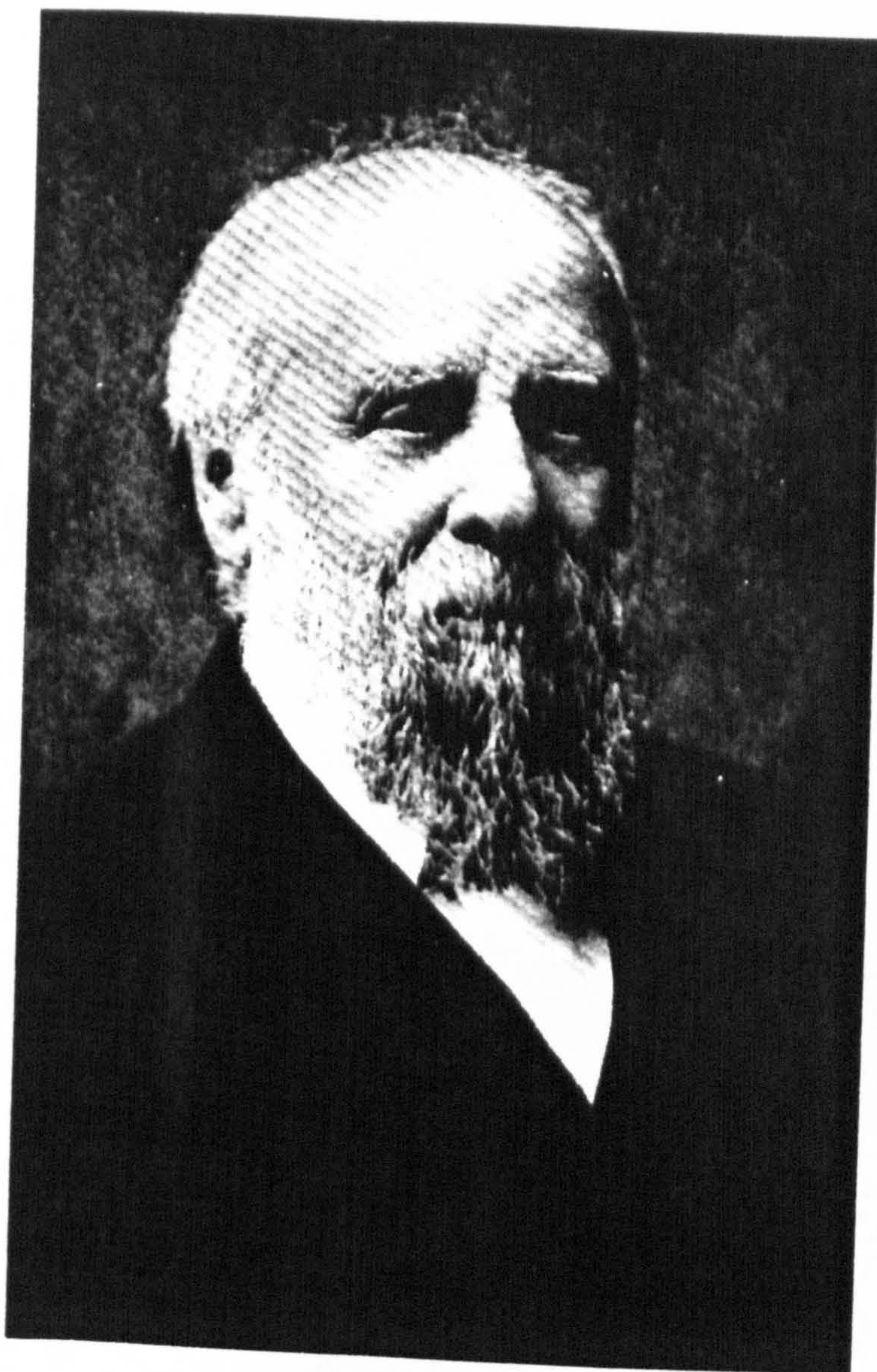
....he has been a kind of sewer-maker between 'pipe' and 'key'.....I have been down on the Electric-fluid man in and out of season when silly 39-Article-men have asked me about his capers; - the organs here brawl in church continually and his name is accursed his asinine clients.....My impression is that there is a vast conspiracy to be-little all organ builders of eminence by H. Jones syndicate fellows in order to puff him - the beast Jones. Without giving the least taste of his quality, J. has, through the silly and perpetual letter-writing of other people got a huge advertisement before showing a card!..... (letters to Dr. A. G. Hill, information supplied by B. B. Edmonds, 27th January 1986)



175. Aristide Cavallé-Coll.



176. William Hill.
[Hill, Norman & Beard]



177. Henry Willis.



178. Robert Hope-Jones. [Vestal Press]

Thistlethwaite (1990:348) saw Best's organ design for Bolton Town Hall as reflecting both the strengths and the weaknesses of the 19th century English concert organ, and containing the '...seeds of future decadence...'. Best's wholesale condemnation of this 'decadence', as manifested by the work of Hope-Jones, shows where his real sympathies were. Best's 'ideal' organ was a 'classic-romantic' instrument, the English equivalent of those built by Cavallé-Coll in France. These ideas did not have the same impact in England, which can possibly be explained by the fact that no one builder dominated organ-building in the way Cavallé-Coll did in France. Because of this, although England continued to produce some of the greatest players of the instrument (Lemare, Thalben-Ball) and composers who wrote well for the organ (Parry, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Howells, Mathias etc.), the English tradition of organ-playing and composing is not as strong as that in France, where some of the most distinguished composers (Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Messiaen) have held positions as church organists.

CHAPTER 17

THE COMPLETE MUSICIAN

.....Best was a thoroughly all-round musician. He had accurate knowledge on every branch of music.....

(Statham 1909:230)



W. T. Best.

179. Portrait of W. T. Best from the 'Monthly Musical Record' September 1926.

Although he spent his professional life as an organist, Best had a great interest in all branches of music. The range of music encompassed by his editions and transcriptions indicates that his knowledge was wide. Levien (1942:25&26) relates how Best was, on occasions, prepared to use his knowledge and expertise to help both a string quartet and a string orchestra. During his career, Best gave occasional performances as a pianist and conductor, and for a while was active as a teacher.

Pianist

Best made his first appearance as a pianist in 1841 in Carlisle, at a Charity Concert.¹ His next appearance was in 1850, at a concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, when he played one of the clavier parts in J. S. Bach's Concerto in C major.² The only other time that Best appeared as a pianist, known to the writer, was in 1870. On this occasion he fulfilled the rôle of accompanist, at a concert in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, for members of the British Association. The following appraisal appeared in the *Liverpool Courier*:

.....The occasion was remarkable for the first appearance for many years of Mr. Best as a pianoforte accompanist, which post he filled to admiration in the elaborate pianoforte parts of Vieuxtemp's *Rêverie* and Spohr's Concerto, in which pieces the violin part was played by Madlle. Brousil. It was the best specimen of the delicate and difficult art of accompaniment we have heard for many a day, and we hope we shall not have to wait another fourteen years before we are again treated to such fine playing..... (quoted in a letter to MS, Vol.xiii, No.323, 8th October 1870:160&161)

This passage implies that Best must also have performed as pianist in 1856. Statham (1909:232) tells how he unsuccessfully urged Best to '...give one or two pianoforte recitals in the smaller concert-room at St. George's Hall...' after hearing him play the piano at his house '...for a whole evening...' and was impressed with the '...beauty and delicacy of his touch...'. It would seem that this was not an uncommon occurrence. Mansfield (1918:213) quotes the *Musical Times* as recording that '...after dinner, on condition that the room was darkened, he [Best] would

play for an hour or two without intermission, to the delight of his fortunate and spellbound visitors...'. Best was not above demonstrating his skills at other social gatherings, as the following story, as related by William Lowes Rushton to Levien (1942:45), reveals:

.....The pianist Frederick Tivendell, who afterwards went to Germany and became favourably known to Schumann and Spohr, was also there and played, from memory, of course, a "Polka de Concert".....which he had just composed. Later in the evening Best was asked to play. Seating himself at the piano, he put his hands over the keyboard as if going to begin, then suddenly turning round to Tivendell he said, "Is this anything like your Polka?" When he had finished, Tivendell said he had played the Polka perfectly.....

Although he once referred to the pianoforte as '...a percussive arrangement of wires...' (MO, No.227, 1st August 1896:743), Best treated the instrument seriously, and the consensus of opinion would seem to indicate that he was a very fine pianist. Livesey (1926:258) described him as being '...like Saint-Saëns...[a] highly finished performer on the pianoforte...'. The *Musical Times* (1st March 1894:165&166) maintained that he possessed the '...rare faculty of "drawing" the tones...' from the instrument, which disproved the theory that '...a good organist cannot be a good pianist...'. His technique as a pianist was described as being '...of the tranquil, yet brilliant school of Thalberg...', and was based on a close observation of the methods of that pianist, who was '...a memorable figure at the piano...', and also of other performers, as Best was '...tireless in attending all manner of musical performances, noting carefully the ways of the great virtuosi, and adapting them to his own special needs...' (MO, March 1937:537). However, not everyone was of the same opinion. William Faulkes, who had heard Best play at his home in Broad Green, regarded him as having '...no sympathy with the piano...', and although he thought that his technique was excellent, found his touch '...very hard...' (Harrison nd:22).

Best insisted that a good pianoforte technique was essential for an organist. In his *First Organ Book* ([1883]:2) he writes that the student should '...be acquainted with all that concerns the technical difficulties of the key-board of a pianoforte...' and continues by suggesting pianoforte studies for the aspiring organist.³ His own playing had '...a suggestion of brilliance...and masterly control

of the instrument associated with the pianoforte rather than the organ...' (MO, May 1937:728). Best also used to like to contrast his own situation with that of the travelling virtuoso pianist, whom he described as '...a person who travels with a dozen programmes...', whilst he as a Corporation Organist had '...to present an unending series [of programmes], all the year round, for years...' (MO, January 1922:328).

Conductor

Although Best claimed that he was '...never one of those who *beat the air* with a stick...' (MO, January 1922:328), he did, however occasionally appear as a conductor.

At the 'Grand Concert' held at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, on the 10th October 1855, on the occasion of the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, Best conducted a chorus of one hundred and fifty singers from the Liverpool Philharmonic Society in '*Fire! Fire!*' by Morley, '*Since I first saw your face*' by Ford and '*O hills, o vales of pleasure*' by Mendelssohn.

In March 1863, in a letter to A. J. Kurtz⁴, the Secretary of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, Best wrote that he would be '...happy to conduct...' his *Triumphal March* at a Philharmonic Society Concert. As the programmes reveal, Best conducted his march at concerts on the 16th and 28th April 1863. It is also likely that Best conducted his own compositions on other occasions, as for example, at the Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concerts on 9th April and 8th October 1850, where the programmes show that his 4-part song '*Harvest Home*', and chorus '*Shall e'er my heart find peace on earth*' were performed.

See them caper,
Wrapt in clouds of lurid vapour!
Let us fly them! let us fly!

SOLO.....Mr. Weiss.

And Chorus of Druids and Heathens.

Unclouded now, the flame is bright!
Thus faith from error sever;
Though foes may cloud or quell our light,
Yet thine, thy light shall shine for ever!

SOLO PIANOFORTE.

“Concerto in C Major.”..... *Weber.*

Madame ARABELLA GODDARD.

ARIA & CHORUS .. “Stabat Mater.”..... *Rossini.*

Solo.....Mademoiselle PAREPA.

And CHORUS.

Inflamatus et accensus,
Per te, Virgo, sim defensus
In die judicii.
Fac me cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi præmuniri,
Confoveri gratiâ.

TRIUMPHAL MARCH..... *W. T. Best.*

Conducted by the Composer.

AN INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES.

180. *Liverpool Philharmonic Society Concert - 28th April 1863.*
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]

PART I, r.

Beethoven's SYMPHONY in C. MINOR.

ALLEGRO CON BRIO.

ANDANTE CON MOTO.

SCHERZO.

FINALE ALLEGRO.

CHORUS..... *Best.*

Shall e'er my heart find peace on earth,
Or in the earth's cold bosom;
Within the arms of love below,
Or in the realms above us.
That would my spirit solve and know
Ere life on earth shall cease to flow.

*181. Concert of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society - 9th April 1850.
[Archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society]*

Teacher

Best was active as a teacher from an early stage in his career. As well as playing recitals, his duties as Organist at the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art involved him in giving lessons, for which the fee was twelve guineas for a course of twenty lessons.⁵ It would appear that Best gave up teaching some time in the early 1870's, as a young lady to whom he gave some advice on organ playing records him as saying in 1892 '...I have not taken pupils during the last twenty years or more...' ('Discipula' 1898:6). It is also likely that, in view of his temperament, Best only enjoyed teaching at the highest level.

During this time Best had a number of distinguished British and American pupils. In the case of Charles Swinnerton Heap (1847–1900), study with Best formed the summit of his European musical education. Heap was an articled pupil of Dr. Monk at York Minster, before gaining the Mendelssohn Scholarship in 1865. He studied with Moscheles, Hauptman, Richter and Reinecke in Leipzig, occasionally deputising for the latter as organist at the Gewandhaus Concerts (Squire/Warrack 1980, Vol.viii:419). In 1867 he returned to England, and by arrangement with the Scholarship Committee, began to study with Best (Nettel 1977:23). Heap gained the Cambridge Doctorate in Music in 1873, and became a leading figure, as composer and conductor, in the musical life of the Midlands. He is chiefly remembered today as the dedicatee of Elgar's Organ Sonata (Op.28), and as the conductor who would, had he not died, have prepared the Birmingham Festival Chorus for the first performance of the same composer's *The Dream of Gerontius*.

An American pupil, Everett E. Truette (b.1861), also studied in Europe before approaching Best for lessons. At first, Best replied by saying that he did not teach at all, adding that '...You Americans are fond of studying music in Germany, and coming to England to rub off the Teutonic rust...'. To this Truette replied that as he had studied with Alexandre Guilmant for six months he thought that '...the Teutonic rust had about all been rubbed off...', after which he received a cordial response from Best (Levien 1942:35). On his return to America, Truette

was active as organist, composer and author, founding the American Guild of Organists and writing *Organ Registration - A Comprehensive Treatise* (Boston 1919).

Among Best's other American pupils was George Elbridge Whiting (1840-1923), who studied with him from 1863 to 1865. In the United States Whiting worked mainly in the Boston area, as organist, conductor and composer, becoming principal organ instructor at the New England Conservatory of Music (Daly 1980, Vol.xx:389).

Edwin Matthew Lott (1836-1902) was one of Best's English pupils. He described his first lesson with Best in the following manner:

....."I was articled to him [Best], and came from my native place, Jersey, to begin my lessons. The morning I arrived he asked me to play something, and in the course of the piece I swayed about. When I had finished, Best said, 'where do you come from?' 'Jersey', I answered. 'When did you cross?' 'Last night'. 'You had a bad passage!' I was a little surprised at his appearing to know this, and replied, 'Yes, we had a very rough passage'. 'Yes', responded Best, 'I can see that you have not got over the motion of the ship yet'..... (Levien 1942:25)

Lott later became organist of St. Sepulchre's, Holborn, and it was here that he taught the young Henry Wood. Wood (1938:27) described Lott as '...dressing like the Abbé Liszt...' and being of '...striking appearance - over six feet in height and very broad...'.

Another English pupil was Michael Maybrick (1844-1913). He was a native of Liverpool and became a pupil of Best at an early age. He went on to study in Leipzig under Moscheles, Plaidy and Richter. It was whilst he was in Leipzig that it was discovered that he had a good singing voice. After further study in Italy, Maybrick returned to England, and established himself as a concert singer. He made his operatic debut in 1871, but later restricted himself to concert singing. Under the pseudonym of 'Stephen Adams' he composed popular ballads, which included '*Nancy Lee*', '*The Blue Alsatian Mountain*' and '*The Holy City*' (MO, Vol.ii, No.13, 1st October 1878:7&8).

Few details have survived which reveal how Best approached the task of teaching. His first priority would appear to have been attention to detail and a proper playing of the composer's score.⁶ A young lady, whom Best helped with some advice about her organ playing, has supplied the following description of her first 'lesson':

.....Upon arriving at the organ, Mr. Best said "Now Play something; anything you like, just as though you were by yourself; don't think of me", and so saying he took a seat at some little distance from the organ. Summoning up my courage, I played one of Henry Smart's marches; after which I tried Bach's St. Ann's Fugue. When I began to play that piece, Mr. Best deliberately came forward, and seated himself on the organ bench, while in a serio-comic manner, he said, "are you equal to the gradual process of dissection". After I had played the first movement, Mr. Best remarked, "You are fond of the organ, and you have a good touch". "Yes", he repeated, "you have a good touch, although you are rather careless about the fingering, and that is very important". At the close of the final movement, one of my teacher's had recommended me to observe a *rallentando*, for, although not marked in the music, it would add to the effect, and moreover, he had advised an alteration in the last chord. Immediately upon playing it in that manner, Mr. Best exclaimed quite excitedly, not to say petulantly, "What is that for? You must stick to the text". His regard for the work of a great composer was too sacred to allow him to tolerate any alteration of the musician's intention; hence the summary manner in which he chided my discrepancy. After the St. Ann's Fugue I tried several studies from "The Art of Organ Playing", Mr. Best patiently and carefully correcting all my shortcomings for an hour-and-a-half..... ('Discipula' 1898:5&6)

In later years Best used to advise those who wished to learn about organ playing to attend his recitals and to bring copies of the music with them (Harrison nd:12).

Perhaps the clearest idea of Best's approach to the study of the organ can be found in his published tutors - *The Modern School for the Organ* (1853), *The Art of Organ Playing* (1867/1868) and the *First Organ Book* ([1883]). Best also edited English language editions of two Continental 'Organ Schools' - those by Rinck and Lemmens.

Although the *Modern School for the Organ* dates from 1853, the *Musical Standard* of 21st September 1867 (Vol.vii, No.164:176), in its review of Part 1 of *The Art of Organ Playing*, maintained that '...the organ is singularly deficient in books of instruction...', and after mentioning those by Rinck, Steggall and Cooper, stated that a '...recognised organ tutor is still wanting...' and comes to the conclusion that '...Mr. Best has attempted to supply the want, and we think with a

Modern School for the Organ.

by

W. T. Best,

Ent. Sta. Hall.

————— COPYRIGHT —————

LONDON.

ROBERT COCKS & CO. NEW BURLINGTON STREET, MUSIC PUBLISHERS TO THE QUEEN.

*Five complete Vols.
or 10 Parts
Part I Price 10/6
2 " " " "
3 " " " "
4 " " " "*

182. Title-page of W. T. Best's 'Modern School for the Organ' [Cocks].

The Art of Organ Playing

PRACTICALLY ILLUSTRATED
FROM THE FIRST RUDIMENTS TO THE HIGHEST DIFFICULTIES OF THE INSTRUMENT
BOTH IN ITS USE AS AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF CHURCH
MUSIC, AS WELL AS IN THE VARIOUS PURPOSES OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF
THE ORGAN AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

BY

W. T. Best.

Ent. Sta. Hall.

PART II.—STUDIES FOR THE PEDAL.

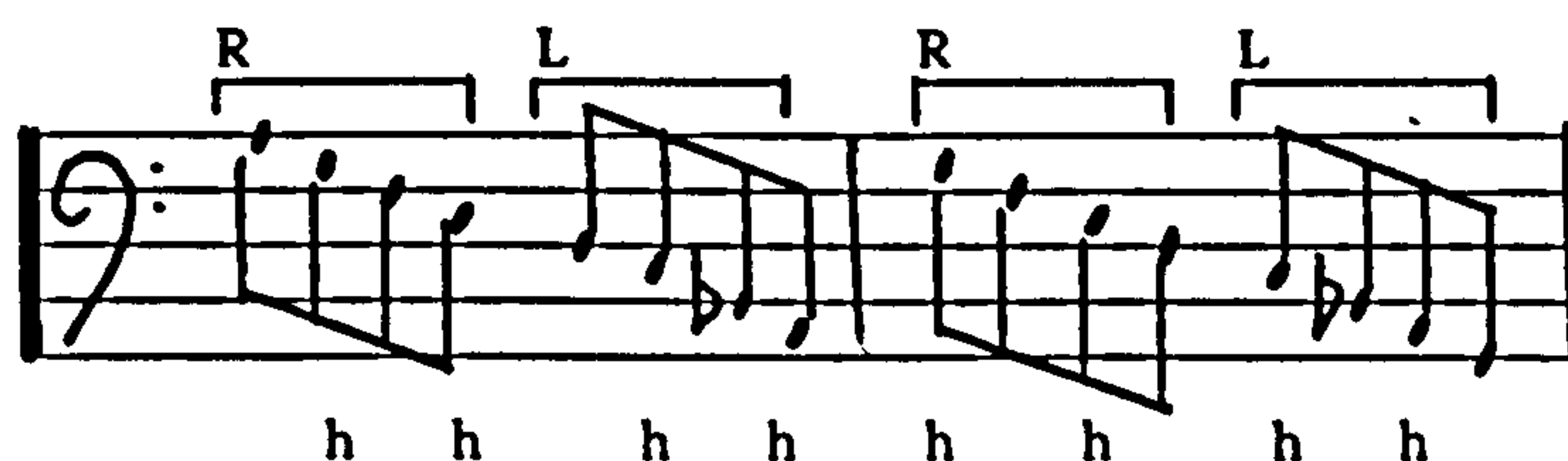
Reduced Price, 7s. 6d

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED.
NEW YORK: THE H. W. GRAY CO., SOLE AGENTS FOR THE U.S.A.

183. Title-page of W. T. Best's 'The Art of Organ Playing' [Novello].

a good chance of having his publication recognised as the standard work...'. *The Art of Organ Playing* had a wide circulation, and Levien (MMR, September 1939:197) claimed that it was used in the Music Conservatories of Brussels and Milan. Best also wrote *Thirty Progressive Studies for the Organ - Composed for the use of Young Students* (Op.33, 1859) which was published by Novello.

In his organ tutors, Best uses the 'orchestral' or 'English' fingers of + 1 2 3 4 5 instead of 1 2 3 4 5. His directions for the pedals are: L = Left foot, R = Right foot, with h to indicate the heel. No indication over the note indicates that it is to be played with the point of the foot



[J. S.BACH *Toccata in D minor (Dorian Mode)* - pedalling by Best from *The Art of Organ Playing*, Part 2, 1867/1868:97]

This 'alphabetical' system of indicating the pedalling can be contrasted with the 'numerical' one used in Frederick Schneider's *Practical Organ School* (Novello), where the left foot is indicated by the figure 1, and the right by the figure 2, the heel being represented by 0. Neither system is as good as that adopted by John Stainer in his primer *The Organ* (Novello) ∇ = toe, O = heel (for the right foot when placed over a note, for the left when placed under), and the similar V = toe and U = heel used by Frederick Archer in *The Organ - A Theoretical and Practical Treatise* (1875, Novello) which are virtually the same as the system in universal use today (v = toe, o = heel).

Best expected a student who began instruction on the organ to have acquired '...a correct knowledge of the rudiments of Music...' as well as '...proficiency in the art of pianoforte playing...' (Best 1853:7). Best's tutors progress logically from '...the first rudiments to the highest difficulties of the

instrument both in its use as an accompaniment to the different styles of church music, as well as in the various purposes of the employment of the organ as a solo instrument...' (Best 1867/1868, Part 1:Preface).

The Modern School for the Organ begins in Part 1 with a description of the instrument, and this is followed by scale exercises in all the major and minor keys. Part 2 consists of pedal exercises. After eight trios for two manuals and pedal, Part 3 has six chorales (presenting the melody in different voices) and a 'Choral Hymn for Two Choirs'. Part 4 consists of twenty-four Studies, a Fugue in F major and concludes with Best's famous '*God save the Queen*' with *Variations and Finale*. It is, perhaps, not without significance that Rinck has a set of variations on the same tune - '*Heil dir Sieges Kranz*' - in his *Practical Organ School*.

Part 1 of *The Art of Organ Playing* begins with easy two-part exercises, and then continues with exercises concerned with different aspects of manual touch. The inclusion of the eight psalm-tones with their various endings and six chorales provide instruction in the ecclesiastical use of the instrument. This part ends with an *Allegretto Pastorale* in C major. Part 2 commences with pedal exercises and these are followed by sixteen chorales arranged for the organ. After this come '...Detached examples from the Works of Bach and other Organ Composers, shewing how passages of special difficulty are to be played...' (Best 1867/1868, Part 2:86). Part 2 ends with a number of complete pieces. The *Musical Standard* of 28th November 1868 (Vol.ix, No.226:212) wrote of Part 2:

.....We may.....well remark the large number of examples taken from the works of Bach (for to Bach has our author gone for most of his selections) and the immense study of that composer's works thereby indicated: no more convincing proof could be afforded of the influence of the old German has on our organists than the living Best and these studies. The pedal-studies will be welcomed by those who flinch not from really hard work.....

The *First Organ Book* and *Thirty Progressive Studies* are less ambitious than the *Modern School for the Organ* or *The Art of Organ Playing*. The *First Organ Book* is described on its title-page as 'An Elementary and Practical Guide for Students'. After a description of the instrument, there are twelve preparatory 2-part exercises '...to establish independent action in the fingers of each hand...' in

FIRST
ORGAN BOOK

AN

Elementary

AND

Practical Guide for Students,

BY

W. T. BEST.

LONDON AND NEW YORK: BOOSEY & Co.

184. Title-page of W. T. Best's 'First Organ Book' [Boosey].

canonic form (Best[1883]:13). These are followed by a further fourteen manual studies, including a 2-part Fugue in C by Best, which he later expanded into his *Concert Fugue on a Trumpet Fanfare* (Augener). The final five exercises in the *First Organ Book* are for manual and pedal. The *Thirty Progressive Studies Op.33* are precisely that – beginning with note against note, and gradually increasing in difficulty.

These organ tutors are very thorough, and work logically towards a specific goal – whether as an introduction to the instrument (*First Organ Book*) or a complete method preparing the player for church or concert work (*The Art of Organ Playing*). From their approach it is possible, perhaps, to gain some idea of how Best approached the task of teaching pupils to play the instrument.⁷

Best composed music throughout his career and often styled himself as 'Organist and Musical Composer'.⁸ It is possible that at some stage in his career Best also taught composition. In 1850 he began work on a text book entitled *Practical Composition. Part 1* of this project – *Counterpoint* was started, but the project as a whole seems to have been abandoned. The manuscript, dated April 1850, still survives in Liverpool City Library (Dq 1475), and contains examples of:

- Simple counterpoint in 2-parts (1st to 5th species).
- Simple counterpoint in 3-parts (1st to 5th species).
- Simple counterpoint in 4-parts (1st to 5th species).
- Counterpoint in 5-parts (florid).
- Counterpoint in 6-parts (florid).
- Counterpoint in 7-parts (florid).
- Counterpoint in 8-parts (florid).
- Imitation in 2- and 3-parts at the 8th.
- Canon 4 in 2 in the octave.

As with Best's organ tutors, this work shows a thorough and logical approach to the subject.

Rinck's Practical Organ School

CAREFULLY REVISED: WITH THE GERMAN DIRECTIONS AND TERMS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

And the Pedal Part printed on a separate staff

EDITED BY

W. T. Best.

Bound in Cloth, price 12s., or in Six Parts, 2s. 6d. each.

PART 1.

PREFACE.

- Nos. 1 to 12.—Short and easy Exercises in two parts.
- " 13 to 24 " " " three parts.
- " 25 to 36. " " " four parts.
- " 37 to 67.—Thirty Preludes in all the Major and Minor Keys.

PART 2.

- Nos. 68 to 132.—Exercises for the Pedals.
- " 133 to 144.—Twelve Chorals, or well-known German Psalm Tunes, with Variations.

PART 3.

- Nos. 145 to 159.—Fifteen Easy Postludes, or Concluding Voluntaries, in the Fugue Style.

PART 4.

- Nos. 160 to 174.—Fifteen Postludes, or Concluding Voluntaries, for alternate Manuals, in the Fugue Style.

PART 5.

- Nos. 175 to 181.—Seven Preludes and Fugues.
- No. 182.—The Flute Concerto.
- " 183.—Variations on "Hil dir im Sieges Kranz," or "God save the King."

PART 6.

- Nos. 184 to 192.—Nine Preludes and Fugues.
- " 193 and 194.—Fantasie and Fugue.

Op. 55.

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED

AND

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO., NEW YORK.

185. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Rinck's 'Practical Organ School' [Novello].

SCHOTT & Co's

STANDARD INSTRUCTION BOOKS

WITH ENGLISH WORDS

Edited by W. T. Best.

ORGAN SCHOOL

BY

J. LEMMENS

1st Part.

2nd Part.

Complete

Copyright

LONDON
SCHOTT & Co

BRUXELLES
SCHOTT FRERES

MAYENCE
B. SCHOTT'S SOHNE

PARIS
EDITIONS SCHOTT

Printed in Germany

186. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of J. Lemmens' 'Organ School' [Schott].

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has three staves: the top staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, and is labeled '1st Part' in the left margin; the middle and bottom staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests, and is labeled '3rd Species' in the right margin. The second system also has three staves: the top staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, and is labeled '3rd Part' in the left margin; the middle and bottom staves contain accompaniment with notes and rests, and is labeled '4th Species' in the right margin. The notation is in a cursive, handwritten style.

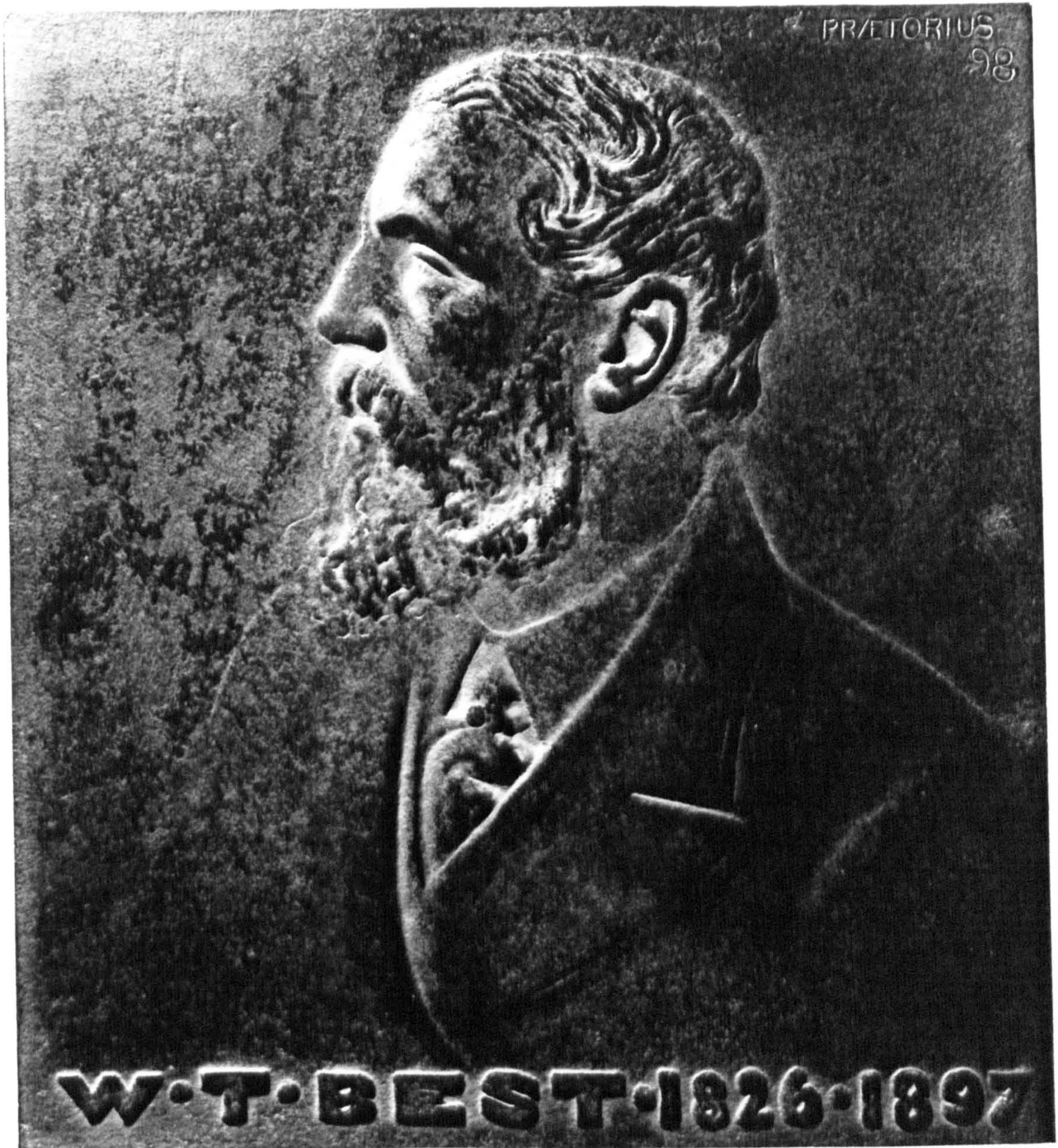
187. A page from the manuscript of W. T. Best's 'Practical Composition'.
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1475]

CHAPTER 18

THE FINAL YEARS

.....Doctors are of no earthly use.....

(W. T. Best, Letter to J. M. Levien, September 1895)



188. *Bronze of W. T. Best*
[National Portrait Gallery]

Best retired from his post at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, and also from the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, in February 1894. He made his last public appearance in Liverpool on September 10th 1894, on the occasion of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York. He gave his last recital in December 1894, when he played at the 'opening' of the organ, built by the firm of Walcker of Ludwigsburg,¹ at the Wesleyan Church at St. Anne's-on-Sea, Lancashire. *Musical Opinion* of 1st January 1895:226 published details of his programme, which contained the following pieces:

St. Anne's Fugue	BACH
Marcia Eroica and Finale	BEST
Organ Concerto in G	HANDEL
Air and Variations in A	WEBER
Intermezzo In A	DRIFFIELD
Allegretto In A	SMART
Offertoire on French Christmas Carols	CHAUVET

Although he was in poor health,² Best was concerned with every detail of the concert. He wrote the following letter to J. T. Lightwood, the organist of the church, and later editor of *The Choir* (Levien 1942:52) in the month prior to the performance:

4, Seymour Road, Broad Green,
Near Liverpool,

Nov. 25, 1894

Dear Sir

I now enclose the organ programme with a specimen of similar 'openings' of new instruments. You will observe that the singing of the 100th Psalm has been included should it be desirable (?), and if so, it must be held by your choir in the organ gallery, and I should then accompany the singing: though the tune is so well known, congregations invariably hesitate to commence unless 'led' as named. At the foot of the first page it is generally added:

It is requested that all may be seated prior to the commencement.

Persons having to leave before the conclusion of the Recital are requested to do so during the interval between the pieces.

No applause.

The printing will assume the following shape:-

On the first page 'the Announcement' - hour, etc., etc. - the 2nd and 3rd pages to contain the 'annotated programme', and the last, or 4th the 'description of the organ' as furnished and now enclosed.

The best point to make the 'collection' is after Handel's organ concerto. It is necessary for me to revise the first proof, as errors creep in at foreign words, etc.. As I have resigned the St. George's Hall organ appointment, name me as 'Mr. W. T. Best' only

[postscript]

The St. Anne's Fugue enters appropriately.

(*The Choir*, August 1926:145)

Lightwood described Best's playing on this occasion in the following words:

.....Although he [Best] was by no means in good health at this time his playing was as wonderful as ever, well emphasizing the famous remark that 'listening to Best is better than any number of lessons'. His pedalling, truly wonderful in its facility, was as clear in the most rapid and intricate passages, as a pianoforte performance by Busoni or Leonard Borwick..... (*The Choir*, August 1926:145)

The fact that Best suffered from increasingly bad health during his retirement is revealed in his correspondence.³ In May 1894 he wrote that the '...gout still lingers and renders me very lame on attempting to walk any distance...'⁴. In a letter written to F. G. Edwards in 1894 he apologised for a late reply because of '... a sharp attack of bronchitis...'⁵ and in February 1895 he revealed to Levien⁶ that he was '...writing in bed, where I have now been for some weeks...'. In August he wrote, again to Levien:⁷

.....There is no doubt of my being found here [home] at the date you name, as the doctors appear quite unable to reduce the most annoying & painful 'swelling of my ankles', which form the Gout now leaves me in, & I can only manage to get into the Study now and then.....

A month later he added:⁸

.....I am getting from bad to worse with the 'feet and ankles', & am afraid in a short time I will be unable to walk from the bedroom to the study. Doctors are of no earthly use though they will take money in such cases.....

Best was unable to attend the unveiling of the bust by Conrad Dressler on 20th

October 1896 because of ill-health, the event being described by Dr. E. J. Hopkins in *The Organist and Choirmaster* of 15th November 1896 (Vol.iv, No.43:110).

THE MEMORIAL TO MR. W. T. BEST, IN ST. GEORGE'S HALL LIVERPOOL

Last month the pleasant ceremony was performed in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, by the Lord Mayor (the Earl of Derby) of unveiling the memorial bust of Mr. W. T. Best, which has been executed for the Memorial Committee by Mr. Conrad Dressler, and, by arrangement with the Corporation, placed on a bracket in front of the organ gallery in St. George's Hall. Previous to these proceedings, a recital was given on the organ by Mr. H. Grimshaw, consisting very appropriately of a selection made entirely from the works of the distinguished composer and organist; and during the proceedings, two further selections were also played. An audience of some 1500 subscribers and others, assembled to mark their high appreciation the late organist was held. All organists will testify to how just an extent "Honour has in this case been shown to one to whom honour was due".

The post of Organist at St. George's Hall was not filled immediately after Best's retirement, and he obviously had a low opinion of the organists who were playing there during the interregnum. In a letter to H. C. Tonkin he wrote '...Mountebanks are punching the Hall organ, here....', and continues by adding that there was '...no appointment likely till 1899...'.⁹ In fact, Dr. Albert Lister Peace, whose playing Best had described as having '...far too much of the cat on hot bricks about it...' (Hollins 1936:121), was appointed to the post at St. George's Hall in 1896. In the same year the organ was rebuilt, by Henry Willis II. This work, which was approved by 'Father' Willis when he re-visited his early masterpiece in 1898 at the age of seventy-seven, included the replacing of the Willis-Barker lever assisted tracker by tubular-pneumatic action, the shortening of the manual compass so as to begin at the note C, that of the pedal extending to G, and the Solo division, with the exception of the four heavy-pressure reeds, being put under expression in a swell-box. There were also several minor modifications which were made at the suggestion of Dr. Peace.(Carrington 1981:17).

Best, however, did not live to see the organ in its rebuilt form. His health began to deteriorate. Leeches were applied to keep down the swelling of his ankles (Levien 1942:52), and three times the doctors tapped him to relieve his heart (Harrison nd:23). He died on the 10th May 1896 after '...having endured much suffering and weariness for many months...' (Levien 1942:52). The causes of death were recorded as 'Morbus cordis, Dropsy (3 years) and Congestion of the lungs (3 days).

REGISTRATION DISTRICT <i>West Derby</i>									
1897. DEATH in the Sub-district of <i>West Derby Rural</i> in the Counties of <i>Liverpool and Lancashire</i>									
Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
427	<i>Tenth May 1897 11 Seymour Road Broadgreen West Derby Liverpool U.O.</i>	<i>William Thomas Best</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>70 years</i>	<i>Retired Organist City of Liverpool</i>	<i>Morbus Cordis Dropsy 3 years Congestion of lungs 3 days Certified by Geoffrey S. Swift M.R.C.S.</i>	<i>A Best Widow of deceased present at death 11 Seymour Road Broadgreen Liverpool</i>	<i>Eleventh May 1897</i>	<i>J. Bunker Registrar</i>

189. Copy of W. T. Best's Death Certificate.

[Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, General Register Office]

W. T. Best was buried on the 13th May 1897 (Carr 1951:15). A '...large concourse of people attended him to his grave...' (Levien 1942:52). Among them was Edward Watson, who wrote (1922:427):

.....I was present at the funeral service in Childwall Church, an ancient village church on outskirts of Liverpool. It was a never-to-be-forgotten occasion. There, in that simple, quiet building, with a tiny organ and a quartet choir, were the church's last offices rendered. Never was there such a gathering of representative men of the profession. In a quiet spot, surmounted by a simple cross, unadorned by any fulsome panegyric, lie the remains of one who was, by common consent, one of the greatest organists of his or any other time.....

At his own request the inscription on the gravestone read:

HERE RESTS IN HOPE
THE BODY OF
WILLIAM THOMAS BEST
BORN AUGUST 13 1826 DIED MAY 10 1897



190. *The Grave of W. T. Best.*
[Photograph by R. D. Tebbet]



*191. The Grave of W. T. Best.
[Photographs by R. D. Tebbet]
[all three originals in colour]*

Best's wife and son were both buried in this same grave. The grave-stone was restored in the early 1940s, through the efforts of E. K. Harrison and the Liverpool Organists' Association. The money was raised by public subscription, and Sir Henry Wood was among the subscribers (Levien 1942:53). This memorial is now [1992] in urgent need of further restoration: the cross which surmounted the stone has gone, and the stone itself is sinking into the ground

As might have been expected, the obituaries in the musical press were fulsome in their tributes. *Musical Opinion* (No.237:613) described Best as '...the greatest organ *virtuoso* of the day...' and the *Musical Times* (1st June 1897:382) as '...the "Prince of Organists"...'.



192. Portrait of W. T. Best from 'The Musical Standard' of 15th May 1897.

Best's will was dated 1st February 1896, and in it he leaves his entire estate to his wife Amalia.¹⁰ His library of manuscripts and printed music was sold by auction (Livesey 1942:53) on the 3rd. November 1897 (Carr 1951:15). Mrs. Best presented some of manuscript material to the Library in Liverpool¹¹, but it is to be regretted that Best's library and papers were not kept intact. J. M. Levien was given Best's solitaire cuff-links by Mrs. Best '...as a remembrance of one [he] addressed so much...' ¹², and Levien, in turn, presented them to the Liverpool Libraries Committee in 1939.¹³

It was perhaps fitting Levien should have received this gift. He had been one of the Hon. Secretaries of the Best memorial Fund Committee, and had corresponded with Best during his retirement. In the years before the Second World War, Levien worked to keep the memory of Britains' great concert organist alive, through the medium of newspaper articles and letters, culminating in the publication of *Impressions of W. T. Best* in 1942. The papers which formed the basis of Levien's research for this book were presented to the Library in Liverpool and form part of Acc.2468 (Hq 920 BES), a 2-volume file, containing articles, newspaper cuttings, autograph letters, genealogical notes etc. relating to W. T. Best.



193. W. T. Best
[*'Musical Opinion'*, 1st May 1894:499]

4 Dymore Road
Broad Green

27th of June 1899

Dear Mr. Levien

I am sending
some spare bits
that Mr. Best
and I wear, I
hope you accept
them as a remembrance
of me you address

to send.

With kindest regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely
Amalia Best

194. Letter from Amalia Best to J. M. Levien.
[Liverpool City Library Hq 920 BES]

CHAPTER 19

THE LEGACY

.....the Paganini, the Liszt, and the Berlioz of the organ.....

(J. M. Levien 1942, - Preface)

Although W. T. Best was very much a man of the 19th century, his legacy as a musician is of considerable importance.

W. T. Best – The Player

Best is remembered today as '...one of the greatest organ virtuosos of the 19th century...' (Mackerness 1980:663). He inaugurated a new style of organ playing, founded on a keyboard technique which was based on that of the great 19th century virtuoso pianists, and with a pedal technique to match. Best's style of playing was also inextricably bound up with the 19th century concert organ, which possessed a wide colour-spectrum, and the means to change tone-colour rapidly by the use of newly developed-aids to registration, such as thumb-pistons etc., which were among the fruits of 19th century technological advance. All the great virtuoso organists since Best's time have had a technique which was comparable with that of the finest pianists, some also performing publicly on the piano.¹ In spite of an almost universal return to the 'classical' concept of the organ, with mechanical action and low wind-pressures – a result of the more 'authentic' approach to performance practice adopted in the latter part of the 20th century – many modern instruments of this type are supplied with sophisticated means of stop-control, incorporating the latest developments in computer technology. Some instruments, such as that at the Tonhalle in Zürich, built by Detlef Kleuker in 1988, are equipped with a dual system of control – mechanical action with an attached console, and electrical action with a detached and movable console, together with, in this instance, 288 adjustable combinations. Such instruments provide the player with the means to approach the art of registration in the same manner as Best, who was a pioneer in this area in the mid 19th century.

Best was a concert organist, and although he was also an '...experienced church musician...', his real genius lay in '...the interpretation of secular music...' (Mackerness 1980:662), and he was, therefore, the head of what has become a distinguished line of organists, who, although they may also have held church appointments, were concert performers, worthy of comparison with those on other instruments. Like Best, these players were able to give outstanding performances of great organ music, and had a repertoire which could also encompass compositions which could attract a non-specialist audience without any loss of musical integrity.

Broadcasting and recordings, together with greater opportunities on the part of concert goers to hear live performances of orchestral and chamber music, has ended the need for wholesale transcription of such repertoire for the organ. Best transcribed and performed this music in order to give the public what was possibly their only opportunity to hear it, and as such, the transcription had a valuable artistic and educational aim. Some of Best's transcriptions, however, such as that of J. S. Bach's *Chaconne in D minor* (BWV 1003) fall into the class of a re-composition, where the transcription assumes a place as an independent composition, which represents a fusion of two musical minds. Such 'creative' transcription, which also includes orchestration, is a form which has occupied some of the greatest musical minds of the 20th century, including Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Transcriptions of this type have been produced by contemporary concert organists, some of the finest coming from the pen of the French player, Jean Guillou (b.1930). His transcriptions of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Stravinsky's *Three Dances from 'Petrouchka'* in their virtuoso writing for the instrument and their kaleidoscopic approach to registration, utilising all the modern sophisticated aids to registration, are in the same spirit as, and form worthy successors to, those of W. T. Best. As Guillou himself writes:

.....a transcription is only justified insofar as it makes us forget that it is a transcription, causing the new instrument and the musical work to merge together as one body.....
(Guillou 1989:5)

Some towns and cities can still boast of their Civic Organists, playing weekly to large audiences in the Town Hall,² and there are still organists whose avowed aim is to create a popular audience for the instrument,³ however, sociological and educational conditions are quite different from those which confronted W. T. Best in the second half of the 19th century. Best's true successors, are not so much the players who hold what may superficially appear to be a similar position as a Civic Organist, but those who combine virtuoso playing with a genuinely creative approach to the use of the instrument - Edwin Lemare (1865-1934), Marcel Dupré (1886-1971), Sir George Thalben Ball (1896-1987) and Jean Guillou (b.1930).

W. T. Best's historical position as an organ virtuoso can be compared to that of Franz Liszt as a pianist. Both players developed great technical prowess,

which they were able to exploit on their instrument, which was itself at a point where new technological developments were being incorporated into its design and structure which radically changed its nature. In addition to revolutionising the playing of their respective instruments, both musicians, partly through the transcription of orchestral music for the keyboard, were able to expand the horizons in writing for the instrument. Best was able to exploit all the new colouristic possibilities of the mid 19th century concert organ, in a manner which had not been possible in earlier centuries. Best's legacy as a player was that he became the prototype for all subsequent virtuoso concert organists, as did Liszt for pianists.

W. T. Best – The Editor, Transcriber and Composer

A detailed assessment of W. T. Best's editions, transcriptions and compositions is outside the scope of this study. As a first step towards such a study the writer has compiled a detailed catalogue of Best's works, which forms Volume 3 of the present work. This catalogue represents the first attempt to itemise Best's complete output, from both printed and manuscript sources. Statham (1908), Mansfield (1918), Levien (1942) and Carr (1951) made no attempt to list his works, although Livesey (*Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1894:500) added a short list of the printed music at the end of a sketch of Best's life, but this list is incomplete and provides no detail. There is no listing of Best's output following his entry in the *New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Mackerness 1980, Vol.ii:662&663).

The following sections present some general observations on Best's legacy as composer, transcriber and editor.

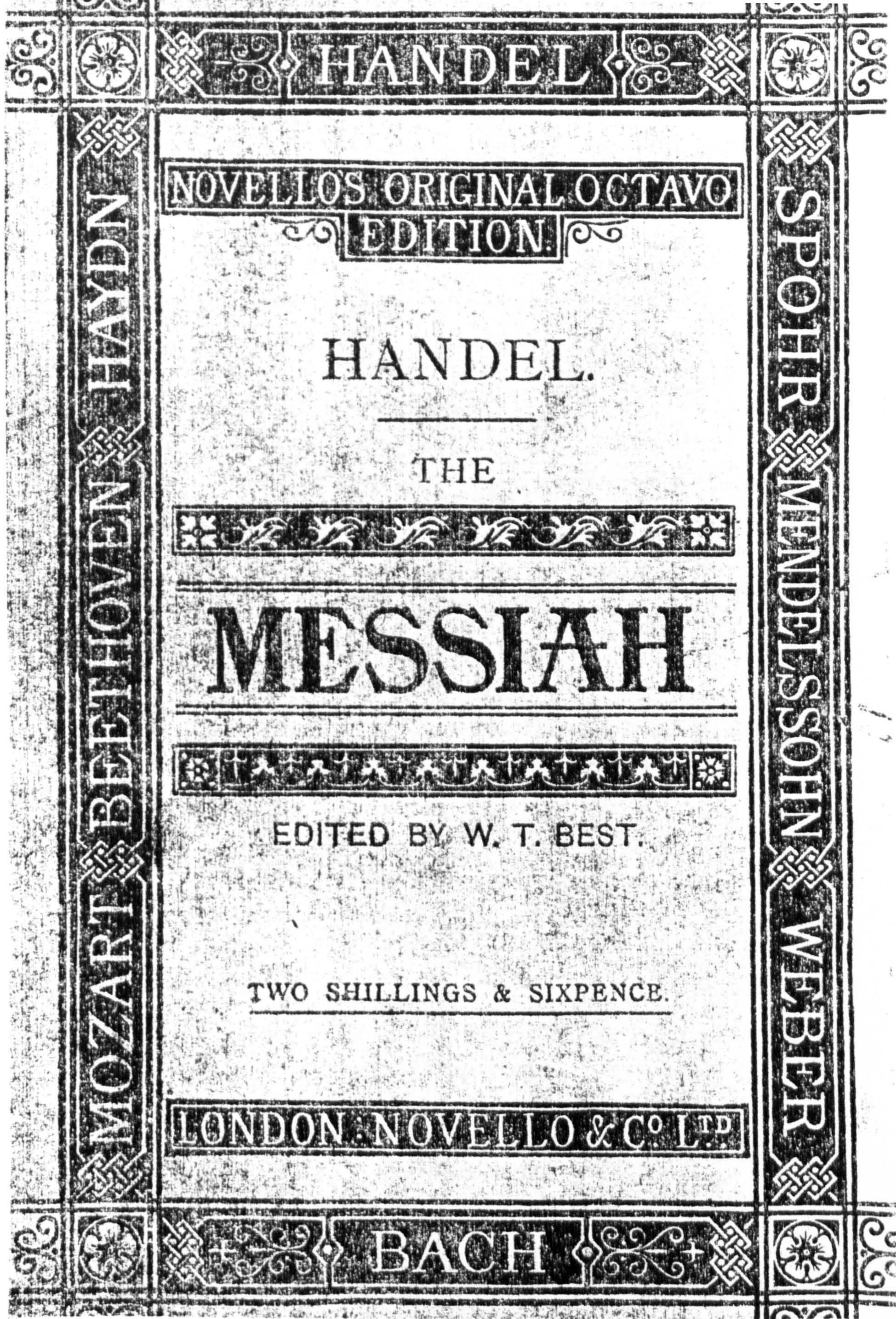
(1) Editor

The art of editing music has been described as that of '...of preparing it for publication, especially music composed by someone other than the editor...' (Mayer Brown 1980:839). The task of the editor can be defined as making clear the best intentions of the composer, assessing the reliability of the sources of the composition in question, both manuscript and printed, and any subsequent revisions. A knowledge of the original notation and the performance practice of the time is essential. This is the late 20th century approach to the task of editing, where the composer's original ideas are presented clearly, with any editorial suggestions being clearly differentiated. In the 19th century, the approach was somewhat different; editors often 'improved' on the work of the composer, in order to bring it '...into line with the aesthetic and technical standards of a different age..' (Mayer Brown 1980:839). Heavily edited versions of the classics were made by virtuoso performers and teachers. It is naïve, from the standpoint of the late 20th century, to describe the work of such editors as 'wrong' or 'misguided'. Such editions are a product of their time, just as scholarly 'urtext' editions are a product of our own. One valuable aspect is that, coming from a time before the development of recording techniques, they can give later generations an idea of how the music was performed by the virtuosi of the time, and therefore afford an insight into the performance practices of the 19th century (see Appendix 4).

As an editor, Best did not restrict his activities to organ music. He produced editions of Handel's *Messiah* and *'Utrecht' Jubilate*, Mozart's *Requiem Mass* and Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* for Novello; a volume of *Handel's Oratorio Songs* and *Handel's Opera Songs* for Boosey; some of Handel's *Concertos for Organ and Orchestra* for Augener; and also music for the church, including a hymn book and psalter. Mackerness (1980:663) described Best's editions of Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn as '...highly professional...', and it is possible to draw conclusions about his approach to editing from his work on the music of these composers, whose compositions formed the backbone of his 'serious' recitals (see Appendix 3).

With composers other than those of his British contemporaries it is unlikely that Best edited the music from manuscript sources. It is more likely that he used a printed version as the basis for his work. Best's edition of Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* (Novello) was, as the title-page proclaims, '...edited and collated with all former editions of the work...'. In his Preface to the edition of Handel's *Six Organ Concertos* (Novello) Best implies that he based his editing on the edition published by Walsh. It is possible that his edition of Handel's *Messiah* was edited from manuscript sources, as the *Musical Standard* (Vol.xiii, No.323, 8th October 1870:160), quoting the *Liverpool Courier*, stated that '...it is very satisfactory to know that a work will be placed before the public, every bar of which has been compared with the original MSS., and which may be taken as exactly placing before us the conceptions of the glorious Handel, as they were recorded by his pen...'. The autograph score of *Messiah*, now in the British Museum, was housed in the library at Buckingham Palace in the 19th century. It is possible that Best had access to this autograph source, but as Novello's published a '...Fac-simile...' of this score '...executed in '...Photo-lithography...' it may be the case that he worked from that.

In his edition of *Messiah*, it is not possible to be certain as to whether Best was responsible for editing the vocal parts as well as preparing the piano accompaniment, the title-page being ambiguous on this point. The edition incorporates Mozart's instrumental additions, which were then considered '...inseparable from a performance of the oratorio par excellence...' (*MS*, Vol.xiii, No.323, 8th October 1870:160). Best's reduction of the orchestral part is well laid out for either pianoforte (for rehearsal purposes) or for organ in lieu of an orchestra, and all the instrumentation is indicated in the keyboard part. Best does not slavishly incorporate every note of Mozart's additional accompaniments, but adapts them to Handel's original outline. He restores the portions that Mozart omits - '*Let all the Angels of God worship Him*' (chorus), '*Thou art gone up on high*' (bass aria), and '*If God be for us*' (soprano aria) in place of Mozart's 'Recitativo accompagnato' at this point in the score. Best restores '*The trumpet shall sound*' to its original full length in place of Mozart's heavy abridgement of the aria, and in these movements he reverts to the original scoring. Best also adds dynamic markings.



195. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's 'Messiah' [Novello]

NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

JUBILATE

IN VOCAL SCORE,

COMPOSED FOR THE PEACE OF UTRECHT

IN THE YEAR 1713.

BY

G. F. HANDEL.

WITH A SEPARATE ACCOMPANIMENT FOR THE PIANOFORTE ARRANGED BY
W. T. BEST.

Est. Six. Half.

Price, in paper cover, 1s

LONDON: NOVELLO, EWER & CO.,
1, BERNERS STREET (W.), AND 36 & 37, QUEEN STREET (E.C.)
BOSTON, NEW YORK, AND PHILADELPHIA: DITSON & CO.

Full score with additional accompaniments by Robert Franz, price 5s. Orchestral parts, consisting of Violins, first and second
Violas, Violoncello and Bass, two Flutes, two Oboes, two Clarinets, two Bassoons, two Horns, two Trumpets,
three Trombones, Drums, and Organ, price complete 6s. Vocal parts 2s. 7d.

196. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's 'Jubilate' [Novello]

NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION

THE

REQUIEM MASS

IN VOCAL SCORE

COMPOSED BY

W. A. MOZART.

EDITED, AND THE PIANOFORTE ACCOMPANIMENT ARRANGED, BY
W. T. BEST.

6s 0d

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED.
MADE IN ENGLAND

197. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Mozart's 'Requiem Mass' [Novello]

Best's edition of *Messiah* reveals his approach towards editing: he is faithful to the text - in this case both that by Handel and that by Mozart. He reproduces Mozart's original accompaniments, and is faithful to Handel in restoring the portions Mozart omitted, in their original orchestration. Best produced a well laid-out keyboard reduction and took care to indicate the instrumentation accurately, whether by Handel or Mozart. Where necessary, as in middle-section of '*The trumpet shall sound*', Best provides an imaginative 'continuo' part which is always indicated as being for the organ. Best applied the same principles to his editing of Handel's '*Utrecht Jubilate*' and Mozart's *Requiem Mass*.

In *Handel's Opera Songs* (Boosey) there are arias from twenty-two of the operas. Of the accompaniments, Best writes in the preface:

.....A word remains as to the pianoforte accompaniment. Though Handel experiments boldly in the instrumentation of one or two of his Operas, and with much originality, his orchestral accompaniment frequently exhibits a characteristic disregard of all inner harmony, the Violins and stringed Basses representing merely the extremes of the composition. It is well known that Handel supplied this indispensable want by his own performance on the Harpsichord in the secular works, and - whenever possible - on the Organ in the oratorios and church music.

In filling out the general design, I have adhered to the style of the composer, to the best of my ability, in the pianoforte accompaniment now given..... (Best 1880 - *Preface*)

Best's editing reveals care and attention to detail. He adds dynamic markings and phrasing. Metronome markings are added in brackets. The arias maintain the full '*da capo*' form, and where necessary, portions of recitative are included. In some of the arias the original orchestration is indicated. In '*Verdi prati*' from *Alcina* Best alters the time signature from 3_2 to 3_8 , but acknowledges the fact. He adds an 'ad lib' section for the keyboard alone to '*Vo far guerra*' from *Rinaldo*, but is scrupulous in explaining this at the beginning of the aria, and also in the text, even to the extent putting the passage concerned between brackets and adding his own initials (see the following page). The same editorial principles are also adopted in the companion volume of *Handel's Oratorio Songs* (Boosey).

First system of musical notation for 'Vo far guerra'. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with similar notation and dynamics.

Third system of musical notation, featuring a *sf* dynamic marking and a *creac.* (crescendo) instruction.

Fourth system of musical notation, including dynamics such as *sf*, *ff*, *mf*, and *p*.

Fifth system of musical notation, showing a passage in brackets with the annotation '(W.T.B.)' above it, indicating a modification by W. T. Best.

198. 'Vo far guerra' from Handel's 'Rinaldo', showing the passage added in brackets by W. T. Best [Boosey]

The greater part of W. T. Best's editing was of music for the keyboard. In his edition of Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*, which is wrongly titled *Well-Tempered Clavichord*, Best presents a clear text, uncluttered with editorial additions (see the following page). As a performer, Best's musical sympathies were wide, and this is reflected in his editions. He edited Bach's and Mendelssohn's organ music, Handels concertos, and music by lesser 18th century composers like Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713–1780) and Nicholas Bruhns (1665–1697). Music by Rheinberger, Merkel, Lefébure-Wély, Boëly, Benois, Chauvet, Mailly, Dubois and Lemmens were prepared for publication, as was music by contemporary Italian and English composers. What becomes clear in a study of Best's editing for the organ is that he does not adopt a single, unvarying approach to the task, but four, which can be grouped under the following headings:

(a) The 'urtext' approach

This is best exemplified in Best's edition of Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonatas and Three Preludes and Fugues*. The composer's text is presented clearly without any editorial additions. Best retains the directions for Clav[ier] I and Clav[ier] II and does not even add the English equivalents [Great, Swell]. He gives no recommendations of his own for registering of the movements, and keeps entirely to Mendelssohn's dynamic markings. However, he does improve the layout of the music on the staves. As he writes in the Preface to the edition (1871), '...I have...used every endeavour to make the music easier to read...always taking special care that the composer's text should be preserved in its integrity from beginning to end...'. This helps to fulfill one of the aims of an editor, which is to make clear the intentions of the composer.

(b) Clear text, with some editorial intervention

This approach can be seen in the series of *Organ Compositions, Ancient and Modern*, published by Robert Cocks. The collection ranges from pieces by Bruhns, Buxtehude, J. S. Bach and Mozart, to Maurice Brosig, Rinck and Lefébure-Wély. Best generally restricted himself to giving dynamic markings only, no specific registration being suggested. This edition presents much worthwhile music from three centuries with a minimum of editorial intervention, and also reveals Best's wide range of musical sympathies and his knowledge of the 17th and 18th century repertoire.

FORTY-EIGHT PRELUDES AND FUGUES,
In all the Major & Minor Keys.

Edited and Collected with
11 former Editions of
his Works by W.T. BEST.

John Sebastian Bach

Prelude 1.

The image shows the first six staves of the musical score for the opening of the Prelude in C major. Each staff consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper line and a bass clef on the lower line. The music begins with a treble clef on the first staff. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks such as slurs and accents. The piece is in C major and 4/4 time.

Part of 48 Preludes & Fugues. Novello's Edition. (2010)

199. The opening of the Prelude in C from W. T. Best's edition of
J. S. Bach's 'Das Wohltemperirte Clavier' [Novello]

First Sonata.

MENDELSSOHN.

ALLEGRO MODERATO E SERIOSO. $\text{♩} = 92$.

MANUALE.

PEDALE.

200. The opening of Mendelssohn's First Sonata for Organ from W. T. Best's edition [Novello]

110

FANTASIA AND FUGA.

D. BUXTEHUDE.

ALLEGRO MODERATO.

Manuale.

Pedale.

10 893

201. The opening of a Fantasia and Fugue by Buxtehude from 'Organ Compositions, Ancient and Modern' edited by W. T. Best [Cocks]

(c) The 'performing edition'

With much of the music he edited, Best could be said to have been providing organists with a 'performing edition'. He would present the composer's text clearly, but add his own indications for tempo, dynamics, phrasing, registration, fingering and pedalling. Much of the music he edited for Augener's *Cecilia* series would fall into this category, as would his complete edition of J. S. Bach's organ music for the same publisher. This task was begun in 1885, and seventeen volumes were completed before Best's death, the remaining volumes being edited by Dr. E. H. Turpin. It was a matter for regret that the whole edition was later revised by Dr. A. Eaglefield Hull as the 'Best-Hull' edition. Hull's revisions were extensive and tended to obscure Best's original editing. All references in this section are concerned with the original edition by Best.

It is unlikely that Best worked from manuscript sources for his Bach edition. It is probably based on the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition, or possibly he collated several editions, as he did with *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*. Best was certainly acquainted with the Peeters edition.⁴

Best presents a clear, logically laid-out text. The editorial additions - metronome markings (in square brackets), registration, manual changes, fingering and pedalling - in no way detract from the clarity of Bach's text. Best uses the 'English' or 'orchestral' fingering of + 1 2 3 4 instead of 1 2 3 4 5, and his own rather cumbersome pedal indications of L, R and h. He took great care over the layout of the text, the *Monthly Musical Record* stating that:

.....the text has been subjected to a thorough revision, the editor going to the length of reducing the whole to manuscript to render the design of each work conspicuously plain to the student; and the left hand part in particular has been the object of painstaking attention, the full extent of which will only be apparent to the practiced executant, who knows but too well how the 'inner parts' are inartistically jumbled together even by composers themselves, to say nothing of the doings of untrained copyists and transcribers..... (quoted by Mansfield 1918:247)

Mansfield (1918:248) summed up the importance of Best's edition as '...the practical

expression of a life's study and experience in the public performance of the works of the Leipsic Cantor...'. [see also Appendix 4]

(d) The 'transcribed' or 're-composed' edition

The manner in which Best approached the editing of certain pieces of organ music would be better described as 'arrangement' or 'transcription'. It is to be assumed that the term 'edition' was used in these instances because the music in question was originally written for the organ, 'arrangement' or 'transcription' being reserved for pieces of music from a different medium being adapted for performance on the organ. In some instances this can amount to 'editing' which become 're-composition' on the part of the editor. Best's approach to the editing of Handel's Organ Concertos will be considered separately. The organ music of Samuel Wesley was edited in this manner. Routley (1968:98) writes of Best re-arranging the *Fugue in G major* as '...a virtuoso piece in much the same style that Liszt and Busoni had used on Bach's organ works in their piano transcriptions...'.

The edition of Wesley's *Gavotte* from the *Twelve Short Pieces* of 1815 serves as a good example of this type of editing on the part of Best. It was published by Augener in Book xl of their *Cecilia* series as an '*Andante (Con moto quasi Allegretto)*'. The original 2-stave music is now laid out on 3-staves, with a pedal part and an expanded texture. From bars 8 to 12 the treble melody of the original is transferred to the tenor register. The melody, instead of being restricted to one tone-colour, is given contrasts of timbre. Near the end of the second part of the movement, where the original opening material is restated, Best thickens the texture, doubling the melody-line in the tenor and 'spicing' the harmony by the addition of a diminished 7th chord. Wesley's original piece is in binary form, however at the end, Best writes: '...As this Andante has no middle or second movement in an attendant key, the apparently necessary addition, or Trio, has been attempted by me. W.T.B. (1888)...'. Best interpolates a Trio of his own of some twenty-four bars in length, and in a style which does not match the original, after which he directs that the *Andante (Gavotte)* be played again, thus replacing the original binary movement with a longer ternary one. This 'edition' amounts to a re-composition of the original, and it should be judged as such - the music of Samuel Wesley as seen through the eyes of the virtuoso W. T. Best.

The opening

Con moto quasi Allegretto.
Gt. Gt. Opus Diapason solo. Ch. 8.1. Sw. with Rueds, 8.
Ped. 2. V'cello.

Bar 8 - the melody is transferred to the tenor register

Ch. Sw. *mp*

Bar 28 - the repeat of the opening phrase

Gt. 16. 8. Gt. to Ped. *f*

202. Samuel Wesley 'Gavotte' [Twelve Short Pieces] as edited by W. T. Best
[Augener - 'Cecilia' Book xl]

W. T. Best and the editing of Handel's Concertos for Organ and Orchestra

Handel's Concertos for Organ held a special place in the affections of W. T. Best. He edited and arranged a large number of them for publication.

For organ solo:

Organ Concerto in G minor, Op.4, No.1 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.4, No.2 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in G minor, Op.4, No.3 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in F major, Op.4, No.4 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in F major, Op.4, No.5 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.4, No.6 (Novello)
Bourrée from Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.7, No.1 (Augener, *Handel Album*, No.43)
Organ Concerto in A major, Op.7, No.2 (Augener, *Cecilia*, Book xlviii)
'Finale' from Organ Concerto in A major, Op.7, No.2 (Augener, *Handel Album*, No.68)
Minuet and *Allegro Fugato* from Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.7, No.3 (Augener, *Handel Album*, Nos.58 & 109)

For organ and orchestra:

Organ Concerto in G minor, Op.4, No.1 (Augener)
Organ Concerto in F major, Op.4, No.4 (Augener)
Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.7, No.1 (Augener)
Organ Concerto in Bb major, Op.7, No.3 (Augener)

For pianoforte solo:

Organ Concerto in G minor, Op.4, No.1 (Novello)
Organ Concerto in F major, Op.4, No.4 (Novello)

Best also edited and arranged *Six Concertos for the Organ (without orchestra)* for Boosey. These were adapted from various movements from Handel's orchestral works, with impeccable precedents, as Best pointed out in the Preface:

It is generally known that, with a few exceptions, the so-called ORGAN CONCERTOS of Handel are not original creations for the instrument, but were compiled and arranged by the composer from earlier instrumental works of a different character.....Following the practice of Handel, as described in the majority of the Organ Concertos, an attempt has now been made by me to preserve, in concerto-form, many notable specimens of his instrumental style having a special aptitude for effect upon an organ, which otherwise might suffer unmerited neglect and rarely be heard in their original or any other shape..... (Best, November 1879)

The following movements from the Organ Concertos were included in these 'concerti':

- 'Menuetto' from Organ Concerto, Op.7, No.5 (transposed - in *Concerto No.2 in A*)
- 'Menuetto' from Organ Concerto, Op.7, No.3 and 'Allegro' from Organ Concerto, Op.7, No.4 (both transposed - in *Concerto No.3 in C minor*)
- 'Allegro' and 'Andante larghetto e staccato' (variations on a ground bass) from Organ Concerto Op.7, No.5 (*Concerto No.4 in G minor*)
- 'Allegro' from Concerto in F "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" (*Concerto No.5 in F*)
- 'Andante' (a tempo ordinario) from Organ Concerto, Op.7, No.6 (*Concerto No.6 in D*)

Best described Handel's Organ Concertos as follows:

Of the well-known FIRST SET of Six Organ Concertos which appeared in 1738, (Op.4), the FIRST, in G minor and major, is an original work of conspicuous merit. The SECOND concerto, in B flat, has a short and pompous introductory movement leading to the Allegro, (4-4) - here the original matter ends, as the latter movement is taken from the Third Sonata or Trio for stringed instruments. The final Allegretto (3-8), is derived from the organ obligato to the song from *Deborah* "In the battle, fame pursuing". The THIRD concerto, in G minor, has been extracted from the Fifth Sonata in trio-form - as before - as regards its Adagio (4-4), and the succeeding Allegro (3-4). The last movement, a Gavotte (4-4), also does duty as finale to the Fifth organ concerto of the Third set, and is to be found in the Opera of *Agrippina* (produced at Venice in 1709), as a song for Soprano with Violoncello obligato, "Non ho cor che per amarti"; also as the last movement in the Second Solo or Sonata for the Flute. The FOURTH concerto, in F, is entirely original except the opening Allegro (4-4), which is previously to be met with in the shape of a Pastoral Chorus from the Opera of *Alcina* "Questo e in cielo". The FIFTH concerto also in the same key, is identical from beginning to end with the Eleventh Solo or Sonata for the Flute. The SIXTH concerto, in B flat, was composed for the Harp, and frequently performed in Handel's day by a clever young player named Powell, for whom, in fact, it was designed. The accompanying Violins in this concerto are directed to play *con sordini*, and the string basses *pizzicata*.

A SECOND SET of Six Organ Concertos appears to have been "made up" from the Twelve Grand Concertos for stringed instruments.

A THIRD SET of Six Organ Concertos (op.7), was a posthumous publication of somewhat inferior musical interest, being largely sketched out for the extempore additions of the performer, as was Handel's custom when playing these works after blindness had overtaken him in his closing years.

The FIRST concerto of this series is remarkable as containing the only instance known of the employment of the organ pedals by Handel; where in the course of the first movement (an extended piece in variation-form), a third staff has been added for a short and simple series of fundamental bass-notes. The allegro in the FOURTH concerto - evidently a favourite movement of the composer - in D minor (3-8), has been incorporated in many other works: the Third *Suite de Pieces*, the Sixth Concerto with Oboes, the Overture to the Opera *Pastor Fida*, &c.. The Gavotte in G minor (4-4), which ends the FIFTH of these Organ Concertos, performs the same office for the THIRD of the FIRST SET, and is really an extract from earlier works, as previously mentioned..... (Best 1879)

Early in his career, Best was in agreement with Berlioz's opinion '...adverse to the combination of an Organ with the Orchestra, in solo performance...' (1858 - *Preface*), and edited the concertos from Op.4 for organ solo (Novello). It could be argued that this edition of the Op.4 concertos should be considered as 'transcriptions' rather than 'editions', but as Best treats the solo organ passages in very much the same manner in these 'transcribed' concertos as he does in his 'editions' of the concertos for organ and orchestra, they have been included in this section.

Best was fully aware of the nature of Handel's original scoring for the organ, describing it as '...a mere Treble and Bass...', with a '...few figures being added here and there to indicate the chords...' (Best 1858 - *Preface*). He regarded this as a sketch, and filled out the texture and added a part for the pedals. In fact, Best re-created the music in terms of the mid 19th century concert organ for performance in a large hall, a task he regarded as demanding '...the highest powers of an Organist...' (Best 1858 - *Preface*). Mansfield (1918:245) described this in the following words:

.....every unprejudiced observer must be impressed with the evidence of Best's deep reverence for the original, exhibited simultaneously with the clearest possible conception of the modern organist and the capabilities of the instrument. The amplification of Handel's thin scoring is particularly fine.....

By the time he became solo organist at the Crystal Palace Handel Festivals Best would appear to have revised his opinion concerning the combining of organ with orchestra, and edited four concertos for publication. Best's re-creation of the solo organ parts in these editions follows the same pattern as those concertos arranged for solo performance only. With the orchestral accompaniment Best would appear to have retained Handel's original instrumentation, rather than completely re-score for a large orchestra, as Sir Henry Wood was to do at a later date with the Concerto Op.7, No.3. Best described the original scoring as consisting of '...First and Second Violins, two Oboes (chiefly playing in unison with the violins), Viola, Violoncello and Contra-bass...', which were '...restricted for the most part to 'tutti' passages in Ritornelle-form...' (Best 1879 - *Preface*).

From sets of orchestral parts in the possession of the writer and copies supplied by the publisher (now Stainer & Bell) it would appear that Best was happy to keep to Handel's scoring for strings and oboes. These concertos were those that Best performed at the Handel Festivals, and the orchestra forces used at these events were enormous, numbering hundreds of performers. Best may well have kept to Handel's original scoring, would have anticipated performance by an orchestra of great size, and therefore the orchestral texture he envisaged would have been very different from that of the 18th century original.

In the organ-part of these editions, the orchestral passages are printed in a smaller type than the solo passages. Best amplifies the solo part, adding a pedal line, dynamics, and registration directions. The metronome markings are given in square brackets. All the references are to the original edition of these four concertos for organ with orchestra and not the later 'revision' by Dr. A. Eaglefield Hull. Handel regularly added indication such as '*Adagio ad lib.*', or in the course of a movement he would insert the direction '*ad lib.*'. At these points Handel would have improvised, and in his various editions of the concertos Best supplies cadenzas of his own composition.

It is possible to approach the problem of the cadenza in 18th century concertos from two widely divergent points of view. The first is to compose (or improvise) a cadenza in the style of the composer of the concerto, or, if a whole movement is directed to be improvised, to insert a suitable piece by that composer. Modern scholarship would support this approach. On the other hand, a tradition has grown up of musicians adding cadenzas which reflect the style and personality of the musician supplying the cadenza. This is a tradition which extends from Beethoven, who wrote cadenzas for Mozart's Piano Concerto in D minor (K.466) to Britten who did the same for the Concerto in E flat (K.482). Best's cadenzas fall into the latter category, and did not always find favour, even in the 19th century, the *Musical Standard* of 1st July 1871 (Vol.i, No.361:98) describing that for the Concerto in G minor (Op.4, No.1) as '*...elaborate...*' and '*...un-Handelian...*'. Mansfield (1918:245) had a better perspective when he described these cadenzas as '*...Handel expressed in the idiom of W. T. Best...*'. In these cadenzas, Best the 19th century virtuoso adds his 'compliment' to the music of his beloved Handel. Donnington (1974:187) maintained that a cadenza in Baroque music '*...is not there to add weight....but a last*


touch of exhilaration...', and this is precisely what Best's cadenzas achieve. They should be enjoyed on their own terms and not according to the musicological ideas of a later time.

Best (1858 - *Preface*) summed up his aims in editing Handel's Organ Concertos as not '...endeavouring to enforce a particular mode of treatment...' on performers, but to present '...a practical illustration of his own manner of reading a favorite [*sic*] and most valued work, after a diligent study of several years...'

As performed at the Handel Festival, Crystal Palace, 1888.

Seventh
Organ Concerto
with Orchestral Accompaniment

Andante. *Org.* *Orch.*



by
G. J. Handel

Edited, Arranged and Supplemented with a Cadenza by
W. T. Best,

Augener & Co. London.
86. Newgate Street, E.C. + 1. Foubert's Place, W.
Ent. Str. Hall.

Augener & Co. Edition
798763.
Complete.

SEPARATELY
798763^a Organ Score.
798763^b Orchestral Parts.

204. Title-page of W. T. Best's edition of Handel's Organ Concerto in B flat Op. 7 'As performed at the Handel Festival, Crystal Palace, 1888' [Augener]

(CADENZA. W. T. Best.)

ad lib. Sw. Ch. +

rall. Piu Lento. Ch. +

Sw. Ch. +

Sw. Ch. +

mf

Largo.

mf

32.16.8. R L

206. W. T. Best's cadenza for the first movement of Handel's Concerto in B flat for organ and orchestra [Augener]

Handwritten musical score for organ part, page 10. The score consists of 11 staves of music. The first system (staves 1-3) features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature. The second system (staves 4-6) includes dynamic markings 'mf' and 'f', and a tempo marking 'moderato'. The third system (staves 7-9) includes a tempo marking 'moderato' and a dynamic marking 'f'. The fourth system (staves 10-11) includes a tempo marking 'moderato' and a dynamic marking 'f'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

207. W. T. Best's MS organ part for the Concerto in G minor for organ and orchestra [Liverpool City Library Dq 1466]

W. T. Best and editions of Church Music

As might be expected, Best was most active as an editor of organ music, but did a certain amount of editing of music for the church, the original impetus probably coming from his work as a parish church organist. His editing in this field does not exhibit the extremes of approach revealed in his editions for organ, and with the exception of his treatment of plainsong, is straightforward and uncomplicated.

1848 saw the publication of *Eighty Chorales Psalm and Hymn Tunes*, Best being responsible for the editing, and some of the harmonisations. It is also possible that he contemplated another set, as there is a manuscript entitled *40 Psalm and Hymn Tunes*, of which two tunes only survive, in Liverpool City Library (Dq 1476). Best edited two collections of Anglican chants and a *Choral Service Manual*, but the only anthem he would appear to have edited was 'O Praise our God' by F. Bühler, to which he added an organ accompaniment.

It is interesting to note that Best edited plainsong, in addition to Anglican chant, for the singing of the Psalms and Canticles. There is a manuscript, dated 26th August 1850, of *Gregorian Services to the Canticles* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476), and he published *The Psalter adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant* (1868) and *An Evening Service adapted to the Ancient Gregorian Plain Chant*. In the manuscript work and in the Psalter Best adapted the plainsong to resemble an Anglican chant. In the *Evening Service* he irons out the plainsong, and re-arranges it for S. A. T. B. with a free organ part, in a manner which spoils the natural flow of the original, which was probably the opposite of his intention (see following page). Best's desire was to make the music accessible to English parish church choirs, and to make it easier to perform for those choralists unaccustomed to reading and singing plainsong in its original notation.

An Evening Service,

· consisting of the

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis,

adapted to the Ancient Gregorian plain Chant.

In Score for Four Voices, with a free Organ part,

by

W. T. Best.

Reduced Price 1/6

London, NOVELLO, EWER & CO. 1, Berners Street, W. and 87 & 89, Queen Street, E.C.

MAGNIFICAT.

ALLEGRO MODERATO.

My soul doth magni.fy the Lord: and my spirit*

SOPRANO.
ALTO.

FULL. *f*

TENOR.
BASS.

My soul doth magni.fy the Lord: and my spirit*

ORGAN.

hath re.joic.ed in God my Sa....viour. For he hath..... re..

DEC: *p*

hath re.joic.ed in God my Sa....viour. For he hath..... re..

p

☞ The asterisk * indicates that a slight pause must be made wherever it occurs.

An Evening Service, W. T. BEST.

2451.

208. The opening of the 'Magnificat' from W. T. Best's 'Evening Service adapted to the Ancient Ecclesiastical Chant' [Novello]

Conclusion

There is no consistency of approach in what is grouped under the general heading of 'editing' in W. T. Best's published output. The editing ranges from providing a clear 'urtext' to what, perhaps, should be more accurately termed 'transcription'. However, what is consistent, is the seriousness of approach on the part of the editor, and the wide personal musical experience and knowledge upon which he was able to draw. Best always sought to present the music in the best manner possible, and this extended to the actual presentation of the manuscript. George Augener related that Best '...wrote in black ink for the notes, but put in the expression marks with red ink and the registering in blue...' (Mansfield 1918:243). Best concern over the smallest detail can be seen in his 'Directions to the Engravers' (see following page), and there are few misprints in his publications.

Although the 19th century was famous for the production of complete editions, such as those of the music of Bach and Handel, the products of German musical scholarship, the contribution of W. T. Best to this field of musical endeavour was significant for its range and the excellence of its quality. Best deserves a place as one of the significant editors of the time.

Pl. 1. —

Directions to the Engraver.

All the Titles to be in small old English
Composers' names included.

The Places to the staves
as follows:

n.B. The Bars as below - not thus



Leave as much room for the title of
each piece as possible.

The names of the staves in a very small & distinct type.

W. T. Best

(2) Transcriber

Best is generally remembered today as a player and maker of transcriptions for the organ. An examination of his recital programmes reveals that, particularly in his 'serious' concerts the proportions were, in Best's own words '...half organ music, half arrangements...' (Bryson 1926:12 &13). However, Best did transcribe a large amount of orchestral, choral, operatic, vocal, chamber and instrumental music for the organ, and his reasons for doing this were considered in Chapter 11.

It is interesting and informative to see what Best did not transcribe for the instrument. There is no evidence that he performed or arranged any music by Wagner, Brahms, Tchaikovsky etc., and this may be because he felt that the later 19th century orchestral textures could not be adapted for performance on the organ. Harrison (nd:15) maintains that Best held the view that Wagner's music could not be successfully transcribed for the instrument, and on this point he was proved wrong by Edwind Lemare (1865-1934). Lemare's transcriptions of Wagner were so complete and faithful to the composer that the conductor, Felix Mottl (1856-1911) maintained that he could perfectly well conduct an orchestra from them (Whitworth 1952:161). It is likely that Best had a more 'classical' musical outlook; the latest 'great' composers whose work he transcribed in any quantity were, significantly, Schumann and Mendelssohn.

The range of music transcribed for the organ by Best was very wide, from music by Weinmann and Ducis (1544) to the works of his contemporaries. Music was transcribed from all sources, and in addition to the 'great' composers, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann, Best also transcribed music by Lully, Couperin, Rameau, Gluck, Rossini, Chopin, Spohr, Weber, Liszt, Meyerbeer and numerous lesser composers such as Graun, Benedict and Hatton. Best was especially fond of the music of Handel and transcribed a large amount of his music for the organ. The range and quality of Best's transcriptions make his achievements in this area among the most remarkable of any interpretative artist.

In some of the transcriptions Best gives full rein to his imagination. Bach's music for solo violin, which obviously needs expansion when transferred to the keyboard, lends itself to this sort of treatment. The precedent for this was set by Bach himself who was quite happy to turn the *Preludio* from the 3rd Partita for solo violin (BWV 1006) into a ceremonial Prelude for trumpets, drums, concertante organ, oboes and strings as the *Sinfonia* to Cantata No.29 (*Wir danken dir*). The same music was also used in the incomplete Cantata No.120a (*Herr, Gott, Beherrscher aller Dinge*) and as the Prelude to the 4th Lute Suite. Best's transcription for organ of the *Chaconne* from the 2nd Partita for solo violin (BWV 1004) is worthy of a permanent place in the repertoire, and is a worthy precursor of Busoni's realisation for solo pianoforte, Stokowski's for symphony orchestra and Gustav Leonhardt's for harpsichord. Best sought to justify the arranging of music for the organ by invoking the name of J. S. Bach, whom he described as '...the father of all "arrangers"...' (Best, *Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1892:355).

.....A further precedent for this undertaking [transcription] has been furnished by the example of Bach himself; who, in "accommodating" (as he termed it) the violin concertos of the Italian composer and virtuoso Vivaldi, to the organ, may be said to have set the fashion of making arrangements for the latter instrument..... (Best 1879 - *Preface*)

However, not all Best's contemporaries thought highly of his transcriptions, Sir Walter Parratt describing them as '...examples of misapplied skill...' In his reply, which he drily referred to as a '...dressing down...' of the '...impudent cockatoo...' (Bryson 1922:1212), Best listed Bach and other musicians (including contemporaries like Liszt) who had transcribed for the instrument as justification, adding that '...in endeavouring to raise the musical taste of the humbler classes, the municipal authorities of our large towns did not intend their concert organs to be restricted to the performance of preludes and fugues and somewhat dry sonatas...' (*Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1892:355).

Best maintained that a transcription should '...exhibit, in an artistic manner, every important feature of the score...' (*Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1892:355), and this has led some commentators to complain that he overloaded his transcriptions, providing too thick a texture in trying to include a large amount of orchestral

detail. As Whitworth (1952:161) pointed out, '...Best put in *all the notes* from the score, but did not necessarily intend them to be played exactly as written...he would, in performance, modify the actual notes he played...'. Best expected his transcriptions to be performed by players who possessed a fine technique on instruments capable of doing them justice, not '...on imperfectly constructed instruments by players more or less in a state of pupilage...' (Best, *Musical Opinion*, 1st May 1892:355). Whilst not every transcription that Best made for the organ is of enormous technical difficulty, he often makes great demands on the player. His writing for the pedals reveals that he considered this part as of equal importance to the manual parts, and not the mere supplier of an occasional bass note.

From surviving manuscripts it is possible to trace Best's working-methods when he transcribed for the organ. He seems firstly to have made a skeletal sketch of the music on two staves, which outlined the essential features of the music, the harmony often being indicated by means of figures. From the sketch a fair-copy was made, from which the transcription would be printed. Best may well also have performed transcriptions from these sketches alone. He told Levien (1942:45&46) that '...he could play, on the instant, any standard overture with all the instrumentation correctly indicated if he were given the shortest pianoforte score just to remind him of the notes...'.

When transcribing music for the organ, Best rendered the music in a way which was faithful to the composer's original intentions, but, as he put it, '...always in *organ style*...' (Levien 1942:46). He did not try to make the organ *imitate* the orchestra. Best made use of the new solo colours available on the 19th century, but in doing this, he was doing no more than composers of previous centuries, in using colours which were not part of the true *organo pleno*. With regard to registration, there is no consistency; sometimes he will give the dynamics and indicates the original instrumentation (e.g. Beethoven, Symphony No.7 - Scherzo⁵), sometimes just registration and dynamics (e.g. Haydn, Symphony No.103 - Andante⁶) or a combination of both approaches (Meyerbeer, *Le Prophète* - Coronation March⁶).

Compressed & sketch.

-6-

Tempo di Marcia

From the Fourth Symphony.

Spohr.

SP

210. Manuscript sketch of Best's transcription of the 'Tempo di Marcia' from Spohr's 4th Symphony [Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

17

Overture - "Gutenberg"

J. L. Hatton

Andante. All. Marcia.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. It features a piano part on the left with a trill and a vocal line on the right with notes and rests.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. It features a piano part on the left with a trill and a vocal line on the right with notes and rests.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. It features a piano part on the left with a trill and a vocal line on the right with notes and rests.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. It features a piano part on the left with a trill and a vocal line on the right with notes and rests.

211. Manuscript sketch of Best's transcription of J. L. Hatton's Overture - 'Gutenberg' [Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

Sometimes Best would make a literal transference of notes from one medium to another, but often the nature of the original orchestral textures inspired Best to develop some brilliantly inventive organ textures. In addition to their rôle as a means for the popularisation of serious music, and as virtuoso showpieces, Best's transcriptions for organ were a means of extending the scope of the instrument. In adapting orchestral music for the organ, Best had to devise new and effective organ textures, which could then be used in original music for the instrument. This parallels a similar development in the technique of writing for the pianoforte by Liszt as a result of the solution he adopted to the successful adaptation of orchestral textures to the keyboard.

Best himself made a modest number of transcriptions for the pianoforte. As far as can be ascertained this is limited to the following works:

Organ Concerto in G minor (Op.4, No.1)	HANDEL	(Novello)
Organ Concerto in F major (Op.4, No.4)	HANDEL	(Novello)
Minuet from the Overture to <i>Berenice</i>	HANDEL	(Schott)
Overture to the <i>Occasional Oratorio</i>	HANDEL	(Novello)
Symphony No.39 in E flat (K.543)	MOZART	(Liverpool City Library
- Minuet (MS sketch)		Dq 1649)
<i>Don Giovanni</i> (K.527) 'Deh vieni alla finestra'	MOZART	(Schott)
Overture to <i>The Fall of Babylon</i>	SPOHR	(Novello)

To this list could be added the *Marche Triomphale* Op.21, published by Schott⁸, which is, in all likelihood, a transcription of Best's orchestral *Triumphal March*.

The two Handel Concertos were transcribed in a workman-like manner. There is the occasional filled-out chord, but nothing approaching the elaboration found in his editions of these concertos for organ solo. There is no attempt to render the music in a 'pianistic' manner, Best being content to provide a fairly literal transference from one medium to another. No cadenzas are added. The transcription of the Overture to the *Occasional Oratorio* was probably intended as a piano-conductor score to be issued with sets of orchestral parts. The Spohr

1230

FROM THE SEVENTH SYMPHONY.

Scherzo.

BEETHOVEN.

The image displays a musical score for the Scherzo from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. It features two systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a Violin staff. The grand staff begins with the tempo marking 'Presto' and the time signature '♩ = 116'. The word 'Tutti' is written above the first measure. The music consists of rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system also includes a grand staff and a Violin staff. It begins with 'Tutti' and 'tr' (trill) markings. The score includes various dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano), 'f' (forte), 'cres.' (crescendo), and 'sf' (sforzando). The notation shows a direct transference of rhythmic and melodic motifs between the grand staff and the violin part.

A literal transference of notes.

212. Beethoven, transcribed Best, Symphony No. 7 - Scherzo [Novello]

213. Brilliantly inventive organ textures.

(1) Beethoven, transcribed Best, Septet - Variations [Novello]

335

(2) 214. Bach, transcribed Best, Partita No.2 - Chaconne [Novello]

Overture to *The Fall of Babylon* is also a straightforward reduction for the keyboard with no particular exploitation of pianistic effects. The transcription of the Minuet from Mozart's Symphony No.39 does not appear to have been published, although the instructions given in the score by Best concerning passages which were not written out in full may suggest that this was the original intention. The transcription itself is a straightforward reduction for keyboard.

Best's approach is much more pianistic in '*Deh vieni alla finestra*' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The original mandolin part is written in octaves for the right hand throughout, and the vocal line is kept in its original place in the middle of the texture. The transcription of the *Berenice* Minuet would appear to be a piano reduction of Best's arrangement of the movement for string orchestra. It is, of course, possible that the version for strings is an amplification of that for the pianoforte, but what is certain is that neither is a literal transference of Handel's original.

Best would appear to have produced only one transcription for orchestral forces, and characteristically, it was a work by Handel which was originally written for orchestra. The original scoring of the Minuet from *Berenice* was for Violins and Oboes, Violas and Violoncellos [+ Bassoons, Double Basses?] with texture of three parts. Best amplified the texture of the original, scores it for full string orchestra, and adding dynamics bowing and phrasing. It was performed at the 1891 Handel Festival, George Bernard Shaw, writing in *The World* of 1st July of how '...Mr. Best...' gave '...the seventy-two cellos a rare opportunity...'. This transcription shows an idiomatic use of the resources of a string orchestra.

SERENADE

DON GIOVANNI

MOZART.

W. J. BEST.

Allegretto.

PIANO.

8va

p

Canto mp

p

pp

pp

mf

mf

ten.

mf

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

Ped. *

215. Mozart, transcribed Best, 'Deh vieni all finestri' from
'Don Giovanni' [Schott]

Third Symphony.

Minuet

Arranged by

W. P. Best.

Mozart

Allegretto

save

mp

Espressivo fino // Bass as numbered above.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

216. Mozart, transcribed Best, Symphony No.39, Minuet.
[Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

MENUET

de l'Opéra „Berenice“ de G.F.Händel.

Arrangé par W. T. BEST.

Andante con moto. $\text{♩} = 92.$

La melodia ben marcato.

PIANO.

Stich u. Druck von H. SCHOTT'S SÖHNE in Mainz.

91733 h¹¹

217. Handel, transcribed Best, 'Berenice', Minuet [Schott]

MENUET

del'Opéra „BERENICE“ de G.F.HÄNDEL.

Arrangé par W. T. BEST.

(Tutti) Andante con moto. $\text{♩} = 92.$

VIOLINO I.
VIOLINO II.
VIOLA.
VIOLONCELLO.
CONTRABASSO.

218 (a) The opening of Best's transcription of the Minuet from 'Berenice' [Schott]

In bar 17 the tune is taken over by the violas and cellos in the tenor register, accompaniment by the remainder of the strings playing *pizzicato*.

218 (b) Bar 17

The second section is scored so as to give a rich string sound.



A musical score for five string staves. The top staff is Violin I, the second is Violin II, the third is Viola, the fourth is Violoncello, and the fifth is Double Bass. The music is dense and rhythmic, featuring many notes and dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *f* (forte). There are also some slurs and accents throughout the passage.

218 (c) Bar 42

The final statements of the opening tune is given to the second violins and violoncellos in unison.



A musical score for five string staves. The top staff is Violin I, the second is Violin II, the third is Viola, the fourth is Violoncello, and the fifth is Double Bass. The music features dynamic markings such as *dim.* (diminuendo), *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *pizz.* (pizzicato), and *arco* (arco). There are also some slurs and accents throughout the passage.

218 (d) Bar 49

As far as can be ascertained, the *Berenice* Minuet is the only music that Best transcribed for orchestra, although it is possible that others do exist. It is necessary to exercise a certain amount of caution with regard to the part Best may have played in any orchestration attributed to him. One orchestral catalogue lists the Overture to Handel *Occasional Oratorio* as being arranged for orchestra by W. T. Best. An examination of the set of parts in question reveals that:

1. The parts are in the Novello edition (with no editor or arranger named), but in the covers of Breitkopf & Härtels (Leipzig).
2. There are extra parts for 1st & 2nd Flutes and 1st & 2nd Bassoons named as being 'by Perry'.
3. There is no full-score.
4. Included with the set of parts is a two-stave keyboard reduction 'Arranged from the Score by W. T. Best'. This includes indications of the orchestration and may therefore have been provided as a piano-conductor part instead of a full-score.

As Best's name only occurs on the two-stave score it is likely that his involvement was confined to this reduction.

As W. T. Best's transcriptions for the organ form the bulk of his output in this area, they must form the basis for any assessment. The range of composers and styles chosen for transcription is impressive, as is the craftsmanship and inventiveness displayed in their execution. As a body, these transcriptions must form one of the most remarkable collections by an executive artist, covering, as they did, '...the whole field of music, so far as it was representable on the organ...' (Statham 1909:222). The educational impact of these transcriptions cannot be overstressed, and in addition, they form the legacy of a remarkable manifestation of 19th century music-making.

(3) Composer

In common with many other great performers, W. T. Best composed throughout his career. An indication of the importance he attached to this part of his work can be gained from the fact that on his marriage certificate he described his profession solely as 'Musical Composer'⁹, and on other occasions as 'Organist and Composer'¹⁰. As with many performers who compose, Best is more likely to be remembered as a player, perhaps with occasional performances of his music taking place. This is a fate shared by other performer-composers, such as Ignace Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) and Anton Rubinstein (1821-1894), whose compositional output is remembered today by single pieces, such as the latter's *Melody in F*. Mackerness (1980:663) describes Best's original compositions as '...unimportant...', which may be supportable in terms of their relevance to today's performers, but does not take into account their position as '*gebrauchsmusik*' and as part of the total creative personality of one of the great virtuosos of the 19th century.

As might be expected, the bulk of Best's compositions were written for the organ, but he also wrote choral music, and music for the piano and for the orchestra. From surviving manuscript sketches it is possible to trace Best's compositional methods. The composing of pieces does not seem to have come easily to him, and like Beethoven, he had to work hard to give shape to the final composition from his initial ideas. Best's preliminary sketch for a composition would be a first jotting down of ideas in a very basic form, and possibly with numerals to indicate the harmonic progressions, as in the sketch for his *Andante con variazione* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476), an examples from which is reproduced on the following page.

Often there would be substantial changes between the manuscript and printed version of a piece of music. One example is the *Fantasia on a Chorale*, which was published by Augener (*Cecilia* - Book xlvii), and which also survives in manuscript (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282). The *Fantasia* is based on the Scottish Psalm Tune '*Dundee*' (Edinburgh, 1615). On the first page of the manuscript Best has written:

Handwritten musical score for 'Andante con variazione' by W. T. Best. The score is written on ten staves, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include 'Cadenza', 'Cadenza. Solo', 'Legato sempre', 'F.D.', and 'liber'. The manuscript shows signs of being a working draft, with some ink bleed-through and corrections.

219. W. T. Best, manuscript sketch of 'Andante con variazione'
 [Liverpool City Library Dq 1476]

'No'

'to be rewritten W.T.B.'

'Re-written. B'

and on the final page:

'W. T. Best August 13th 1874'

'to be rewritten. B the Butcher.'

The piece was substantially re-written for publication. Of the first 49 bars of the published version there is no sign in the manuscript (except, perhaps, in the idea of an Introduction containing dotted figuration). Instead, Best has a '*Grave e con molto maestà - Andante - Andantino con moto e agitato - Grave*' of 77 bars. The following fugal section and final re-statement of the chorale (in the bass, followed by the treble, with brilliant figuration) is broadly the same in both versions, but with numerous differences of detail, which, at some points, amounts to complete re-writing. In the manuscript the final '*più lento*' becomes '*allegro*' for the final 3½ bars, which does not occur in the printed version.

There are no less than five manuscript versions of the piece that was published originally as *Pastorale* in '*Organ Compositions Ancient and Modern*' (Cocks, [1862], Vol.ii:21). The second of the manuscript sketches is dated 1886, (Liverpool City Library Dq 1649) which was after the date of the published version, which indicates that Best must have worked at pieces, even after publication. The manuscript sketches have 'picturesque' indications ('*Ranz de vaches*', '*Ped. du tonnerre*', '*Campanelli*' etc.) which are absent from the published version. However, both manuscript and published versions retain 'orchestral' indications such as '*corni*', '*Corno Inglese*' etc..

Other pieces which Best either expanded or altered in a major way include the *Concert Fugue on a Trumpet Fanfare* (Augener, *Cecilia* - Book 1) which was originally a 2-part Fugue in Best's *First Organ Book* ([1883]) and the *Fantaisie-*

Moderato assai

Andante con moto

mf

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

220. W. T. Best, manuscript sketch of 'Fantasia Pastorale'
 [Liverpool City Library Dq 1649]

Étude (Novello) which began life as the manuscript *Andante Maestoso in E* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282). The organ '*Pastorale*' in D major (Augener - *Cecilia* Book xix) is a re-working of the pianoforte *Allegretto Pastorale* Op.18 (Addison & Hollier), published in the 1850's.

Best's harmonic sense has been described as '...strong and sometimes harsh...' (Temperley 1985, Vol.xvi:xviii), but he was a skilled contrapuntal writer from early in his compositional career. In the early 4-part Fugue in A minor (from the Prelude & Fugue in A minor Op.2, No.1) the composer executes the *tour-de-force* of introducing a new countersubject with each appearance of the subject or answer in the exposition, so that the fourth part to enter (answer, in the bass (pedals)), is heard against the first countersubject in the soprano, the second countersubject (modified, in the alto) and a new countersubject in the tenor (see following page). Many of the exercises in the *First Organ Book* ([1883]) are canonic, and it is significant that the only part of Best's projected treatise, *Practical Composition*, to be completed was the section on counterpoint.

In his approach to form Best is unadventurous, his compositions tending to fall into the conventional binary, ternary or variation forms. Although he wrote two sonatas for the organ, he does not appear to have been able to construct a convincing movement in sonata-form. The first Sonata (G major Op.38, c.1860, Novello), for example, has a first movement which, after a *Largo* Introduction has an *Allegro con brio* with several motifs presented, but no real development section. Instead, a new theme is added, together with one from the *Largo* Introduction. The second movement is in ternary form, and the final movement a fugue. In the second Sonata (D minor, Augener - *Cecilia* - Book xxix) Best resorts to the introduction of a '*Hymnus Triumphalis*' in the first movement, and the hymn tune '*Duke Street*' in the last to maintain interest (possibly influenced by Mendelssohn's introduction of a chorale in certain of his sonata movements), the middle movement again being in ternary form. There is the same lack of organic development in the *Festival Overture* which consists of a series of contrasting sections - *Andante maestoso* - *Alla Marcia: Allegretto con moto* - *Allegro con brio* - *Marziale e largamente* - *Allegro con brio* - *Più Allegro*. This type of procedure is what led Mansfield (1918:234) to characterise the greatest weakness in Best's compositions as

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are joined by a brace on the left and represent the right and left hands of the organ. The top staff uses a treble clef and the bottom staff uses a bass clef. Both contain complex, rhythmic passages with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bottom staff is a separate line, likely for a pedal point or accompaniment, starting with a forte (ff) dynamic marking and containing a series of notes with a slur over the final few.

The second system of the musical score also consists of three staves. The top two staves are joined by a brace on the left and represent the right and left hands of the organ. The top staff uses a treble clef and the bottom staff uses a bass clef. Both contain complex, rhythmic passages with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bottom staff is a separate line, likely for a pedal point or accompaniment, containing a series of notes with a slur over the final few.

221. W. T. Best, *Fugue in A minor (Op.2, No.1)* for organ [Novello]

'..."scrappiness", or want of continuity, – the excessive employment of detached phrases...'. Best would have appear to have been most at ease in the contrapuntal forms such as fugue, and forms which were based on contrasted sections, (binary, ternary and the various 'concert fantasia' selections of tunes), or variation, where he could use his genius for developing novel and interesting textures and figurations in music which was essentially static.

Early in his career, probably whilst he was in London, Best wrote a quantity of music for the pianoforte, although the *Grand mouvement de danse*, Op.4 dates from 1847 and the *Three Characteristic Pieces*, Op.35 from 1859. London had been the scene of developments in keyboard composition in the 1790's and early 1800's, and a group of composers with Muzio Clementi (1752–1832) at their head has been called 'the London Pianoforte School'. The next generation of English pianoforte composers were centred on the Royal Academy of Music and the teaching of Cipriani Potter (1792–1871) who fostered a 'conservative romanticism' in opposition to the spectacular virtuosity of Thalberg and Liszt. Best himself was obviously influenced by such virtuosi, as in his *Romanesca*, Op.16 and his *Grand mouvement de danse*, Op.4, he '...cultivated a heavy chordal texture suggesting Liszt or even later composers like Reger and Busoni...' (Temperley 1985, Vol.xvi:xviii). Among his other compositions are an exciting *Tarantella*, Op.10, a *Schottisch*, Op.11, an *Allegretto Pastorale*, Op.18, a spirited *Valse di Bravura*, Op.20 and a *Notturmo*, Op.27 which was dedicated to 'M^{elle} Amalia Bellini'. As Temperley points out (1985, Vol.xvi:xviii), by the time of the *Three Characteristic Pieces*, Op.35 of 1859, Best had thinned and simplified the texture of his pianoforte writing, offering a new lyricism with colourful harmony to suit the 'characteristic' nature of the first two pieces. The third, a '*Caprice de Concert*' entitled *L'Inquiétude*, had a strong dramatic element which was reminiscent of Beethoven. Temperley (1985:27) sums up Best as '...an original and underestimated composer...' for the pianoforte. After the Op.35 pieces, Best appears to have stopped writing for the pianoforte, Temperley (1985, Vol.xvi:xviii) regretting that '...Best's later concentration on relatively conventional organ music deprived Britain of one of its most promising composers for the piano...'.

TARANTELLA.

Op: 10.

W. T. Best.

ALLEGRO
MOLTO

p *Ped:* *cres:* *f* *ff*

p *cres:* *f*

p *f* *pp*

cres: *dim:* *p* *pl* *cres:*

pp *p*

222. W. T. Best, 'Tarantella', Op.10 for pianoforte [Schott]

VALESE DI BRAVURA.

Op. 20.

W. T. Best.

ALLEGRO.
CON SPIRITO.

The first system of the piano score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 3/4. The music begins with a forte dynamic marking (**ff**). The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and accents. Below the bass staff, there are two pedal markings: "Ped:" followed by an asterisk, and another "Ped:" followed by an asterisk, indicating where to use the sustain pedal.

The second system of the piano score continues the two-staff arrangement. It features a piano dynamic marking (**p**) and includes slurs and accents. The notation is dense with sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

The third system of the piano score continues the two-staff arrangement. It features a piano dynamic marking (**p**) and includes slurs and accents. The notation is dense with sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

223. W. T. Best, 'Valse di Bravura' , Op.20 for pianoforte [Schott]

As far as can be ascertained, W. T. Best composed only two pieces for orchestra, the *Triumphal March* and the *Festival Overture*. It would seem that neither was published in its original form, and the present writer has been unable to locate the score or orchestral parts of either composition. Both works, however, survive in transcription, the *March* as a pianoforte duet, and the *Overture* as a piece for the organ. The *March* was performed by Sir Charles Hallé on 19th December 1855, but he found it impossible to say '...anything agreeable...about his [Best's] composition...' (Hallé, *Diaries*, (ed. Kennedy) 1972:151). Best himself conducted a *Triumphal March* (presumably the same work) at concerts of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society on the 14th and 28th April 1863. In a letter to A. J. Kurtz, written on 26th March 1863 (BL Add. 33965, f.11), Best describes the *March* as '...not out of the ordinary way of such compositions...'. The first reference to the *Festival Overture* is in a letter to the secretary of the Philharmonic Society in June 1875 (BL Loan 48/13/4, ff 29&30) in which Best asks the Directors to give the work a performance. As there is no reference to a first performance of a work by Best in either Elkin (1946) or Foster (1912) it must be assumed that the request was turned down. However, it was performed, under the baton of Sir Julius Benedict, at a Grand Miscellaneous Concert, held on Thursday 23rd September 1875, in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, as part of the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival. The *Overture* was generally well received. *The Standard* of 23rd September 1875 described it as '...richly harmonised and brilliantly instrumented...', although *The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette* (25th September 1875) thought that '...it occupied time that could have been more profitably employed...'. *The Norwich Mercury* of 25th September provided more information that the other newspapers:

.....The second part of the Concert opened with a new Festival Overture, composed expressly for the occasion by Mr. W. T. Best, the eminent organist of St. George's Hall, Liverpool. The overture opens with a melodious march-like movement, developed at some length. To this succeeds an Allegro, opening with a subject suggestive of pianoforte, rather than orchestral music. The developments which follow are ingenious and effective, though the violins are throughout treated in a way which prompts the idea that Mr. Best is more at home with keyed than with stringed instruments. With this reservation we have only praise for a very musicianly and interesting work.....

That the *Festival Overture in Bb* for organ, published by Augener (*Cecilia* - Book liv), is this orchestral overture transposed from the key of C, is confirmed by Peace (1901:49&50) and Mansfield (1918:237).

DRAMATIC CANTATA.

PART THE FIRST.
‘FRIDOLIN.’

A. RANDEGGER.

(First time of Performance in Norwich).

The Words by ERMINIA RUDERSDOFF. Conducted by the Composer.

<i>Introduction and Chorus</i>	A pious youth was Fridolin
<i>Recit.—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	Arising from the lap
<i>Air—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	None but holy, lofty thoughts
<i>Scena and Recit.—Signor FOLI</i>	Proceed, thou hateful minion
<i>Air—Signor FOLI</i>	For one kind glance
<i>Chorus of Hunters</i>	Hark! the horn awakes the morn
<i>Duett—Mr. J. L. WADMORE and Signor FOLI</i>	And wherefore, Hubert?
<i>Chorus of Handmaidens</i>	Calmly flow the equal hours
<i>Recit.—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON</i>	Repose and peace
<i>Air—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON</i>	No bliss can be so great
<i>Recit. and Duett—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON and Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	With urgent message
<i>Quartett—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON, Mr. E. LLOYD, Mr. J. L. WADMORE,</i> <i>and Signor FOLI</i>	Now know I, Hubert
<i>Dance and Chorus of Villagers</i>	With anxious foreboding
<i>Solo—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	Song is resounding
<i>Chorus</i>	Oh! holy sounds
<i>Solo—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	Sancta Maria
<i>Chorus</i>	In darkness wandering
<i>Solo—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	Sancta Maria
<i>Chorus</i>	My noble lady
<i>Recit.—Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	Sancta Maria
<i>Air—Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	The wildest conflicts rage
<i>Duett—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON and Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	O woman, with the pure
<i>Chorus of Smiths (The Forge Scene)</i>	My Waldemar
<i>Solo—Signor FOLI</i>	Gift of demons, raging fire
<i>Chorus</i>	Its fierce impatience to control
<i>Solo—Signor FOLI</i>	Seize the traitor
<i>Chorus</i>	Back! O horror! ye mistake
<i>Solo—Mr. E. LLOYD</i>	Quaff the goblet's madd'ning tide
<i>Chorus</i>	Good smiths
<i>Solo—Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	Laugh at scruples
<i>Chorus</i>	Hold! at your peril
<i>Solo—Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	Dread lord!
<i>Chorus</i>	What mean ye knaves?
<i>Duett and Chorus—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON and Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i> ...	Hubert, thy Squire
<i>Chorus</i>	Oh! awful and mysterious
<i>Epilogue, Trio, and Chorus—Madame LEMMENS SHERRINGTON, Mr. E. LLOYD, and</i> <i>Mr. J. L. WADMORE</i>	Let your anthems raise
	Join we all in glorious song

PART THE SECOND.

<i>Festival Overture</i>	W. T. BEST
<i>Aria</i>	(Composed expressly for this Festival.) "Ah se infelice" (<i>Ugo Conte de Parigi</i>)
	Mademoiselle EMMA ALBANI.
<i>Duett—Two Pianofortes</i>	On Airs from "Freischutz"
	Sir JULIUS BENEDICT and Mr. H. KINGSTON RUDD.
<i>Song</i>	"Looking back"
	Madame PATEY.
<i>Quintett</i>	"Chi mi frena" (<i>Lucia</i>)
	Mademoiselle E. ALBANI, Miss ENRIQUEZ, Mr. E. LLOYD, Signor FOLI, and Mr. J. L. WADMORE.
<i>Caratino</i>	"Ah! quel giorno" (<i>Semiramide</i>)
	Mademoiselle ANNA DE BELOCCA.
<i>Aria</i>	"Jours de mon enfance" (<i>Le Pré aux Clercs</i>)
	Mademoiselle MATHILDA ENÉQUIST.
	<i>Violin Obligato</i>
	M. SAINTON.
<i>New Song</i>	"The Last Farewell"
	Mademoiselle EMMA ALBANI. (Composed expressly for her.)
<i>Duettino</i>	"I Mulattieri"
	Mr. H. GUY and Mr. J. L. WADMORE.
<i>Overture</i>	"La Sirène"
	AUDER

224. Programme of the Grand Miscellaneous Concert held on
23rd September 1875 at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich.

Much of the music that Best wrote for the church would come under the heading of liturgical '*gebrauchsmusik*' – chants, hymn tunes, *Responses to the Commandments*, anthems and settings suitable for parish church use. Music that he would have used in his various appointments as church organist. However, Best also wrote a *Morning and Evening Cathedral Service*, and a *Morning and Evening Service in F*, Op.40, for the famous choir of Leeds Parish Church. In the more extended anthem settings, such as *The Lord is Great in Sion* (Novello), Best characteristically provides an organ part which Webster (*MO*, June 1982) describes as '*...highly exuberant...*'. Among the manuscripts are the sketches of some elaborate settings, such as '*Almighty God, give us grace*' for 8-part choir (1848), and '*O Praise the Lord*' Op.20 (1850), a motet for three choirs (Liverpool City Library Dq 1472).

There is little secular choral music in Best's output. The only published work would appear to be *Autumn Thoughts – 'What mournful thought come o'er the mind'* for 5-part unaccompanied chorus (S.S.A.T.B) (1859, Novello). The words are set in a homophonic style throughout. There are two manuscript part-songs, '*Harvest Song*' (1850) for unaccompanied quartet (S.A.T.B.) and '*The Dream*' for S.A.T.B. chorus (Liverpool City Library Dq 1474). The '*Harvest Song*' is set in a homophonic style, as is '*The Dream*', although the latter remains as a sketch. The archives of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society reveal that on 9th April 1850, another choral work by Best, '*Shall e'er my heart find peace on earth*', was performed. Best also left a manuscript sketch of an arrangement for soprano solo, chorus and organ of the *National Anthem and 'Partant pour la Syrie'* (Liverpool City Library Dq 1282).

The only piece of secular vocal music by Best that the present writer has been able to locate is the manuscript *Serenade: 'Look out upon the stars'*, written for soprano and pianoforte, to a text by Miss Pinkney (Liverpool City Library Dq 1476). This is a straightforward setting for the voice with a delicate accompaniment for the keyboard.

Autumn Thoughts

"WHAT MOURNFUL THOUGHTS COME O'ER THE MIND" (Choral Song) FOR FIVE VOICES,

(WITHOUT ACCOMPANIMENT)

The Words Written by Henry F. Chorley Esq.^{re}

The Music Composed by
W. T. BEST.

Reduced Price 6^d
Small Clafs Copy 1¹/₂

London, J. A. NOVELLO, 69, Dean Str. Solo, & 35, Poultry, also in New York, at 1, Clinton Hall, Astor Place.
ANDANTE CON MOTO.

SOPRANO 1^{mo}

p *cres:*

V. 1. What mourn-ful thoughts come o'er the mind When
V. 2. We think of friends who calm-ly sleep The

SOPRANO 2^{do}

p *cres:*

V. 1. What mourn-ful thoughts come o'er the mind When
V. 2. We think of friends who calm-ly sleep The

ALTO.

p *cres:*

V. 1. What mourn-ful thoughts come o'er the mind When
V. 2. We think of friends who calm-ly sleep The

TENOR.

p *cres:*

V. 1. What mourn-ful thoughts come o'er the mind When
V. 2. We think of friends who calm-ly sleep The

BASS.

p *cres:*

V. 1. What mourn-ful thoughts come o'er the mind When
V. 2. We think of friends who calm-ly sleep The

ANDANTE CON MOTO.

225. W. T. Best, 'Autumn Thoughts' [Novello]

Serenade

"Look out upon the stars."

Written by Miss Lindner. - *Composed by W. T. Best.*

Affettuoso con moto.

Voce.

Piano Forte.

226. W. T. Best, manuscript of the Serenade: 'Look out upon the stars'
 [Liverpool City Library Dq 1476]

Best's greatest contribution, as a composer, to 19th century music was with the music he wrote for the organ. In the early years of the 19th century English organ composition was more insular in its traditions and character than any other branch of the art. This was partly because of the requirements of the Anglican liturgy and also the state of the instrument itself, which was markedly different from those on continental Europe (Temperley 1981:435). The organ was also used in a secular capacity in the London theatres and pleasure gardens, in performances of oratorio, operas and organ concertos – a genre which, although pioneered by Handel, attracted other composers, such as Camidge, Crotch and Samuel Wesley. Pedal departments were scarce at this time, and instruments were tuned to a form of unequal temperament. Perhaps the most significant composer of organ music at this time was Samuel Wesley.

As was outlined in Chapter 2, enormous developments in organ construction and design took place in England during the first half of the 19th century, culminating in the instruments displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851. There were still pockets of resistance to these changes: S. S. Wesley would still insist on the G-compass for the manuals and tuning to unequal temperament for the St. George's Hall organ in 1855, and Sir George Smart (1776–1867), when invited to play on one of the exhibition organs which had a pedalboard, replied '...My dear Sir, I never in my life played on a *gridiron*'...' (Pearce 1927:57). S. S. Wesley and T. A. Walmisley wrote fine organ music which, however, seems to have its spiritual home with the earlier type of instrument. Henry Smart (1813–1879) was perhaps the most famous organist-composer of the mid-Victorian period, and wrote music that was easy on the ear but of no especial merit.

It is against this background that W. T. Best's contribution must be assessed. He was a virtuoso player of the new school, and an enthusiast for the new-style concert instruments. Although also a church organist, his main field of activity was the secular concert hall, and he was not therefore constrained by the demands of the liturgy of the Church of England. The influences to which he was receptive were eclectic – Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn, together with French and Italian composers in the realm of organ music, and, more generally, from the wide range of music that he edited and transcribed. He was to pioneer and develop new

ways of writing for the instrument, in both its sacred and secular capacity, and prepared the way for later composers such as Basil Harwood (1859–1949), Elgar, Stanford, Parry and their successors.

For the church, Best composed his *Collection of Pieces, expressly composed for Church Use* (Novello) which included the famous *March for a Church Festival*, *Six Organ Pieces for Christmas* and both a Wedding and a Funeral March. The influence of J. S. Bach can be seen in the purely contrapuntal compositions such as the *Three Preludes and Fugues Op.2* and the music founded on chorale melodies. It is significant that for this type of piece, Best chose to use English or Scottish psalm tunes, rather than German chorales. The *Fantasia and Fugue in E minor* (Augener, *Cecilia* – Book v) based on the 'Old 81st', and the *Fantasia on a Chorale* (Augener, *Cecilia* – Book xlvi) based on 'Dundee', are indebted to Bach, but also point forward to the Chorale Fantasias of Max Reger. The *Twelve Short Preludes on Old English Psalm Tunes* (Augener, *Cecilia* – Book xv) are chorale preludes whose inspiration are those by Bach. In quoting a line from the verse rather than the name of the tune at the head of each Prelude, Best anticipates the procedure adopted by Parry in his two sets of Chorale Preludes.

It is likely that Best's two sonatas for organ were influenced by the example of Mendelssohn's sonatas, which Best edited for Novello. Like Mendelssohn, in some of his movements, Best includes two 'chorales' (a *Hymnus Triumphalis* and the hymn tune 'Duke Street') in the first and third movement respectively of the second sonata. These form the precursors for the later organ sonatas by Harwood, Elgar and Stanford in the latter part of the century.

A large part of Best's output was specifically secular in character – Overtures, Toccatas, Marches, Variations, a *Fantaisie-Étude* etc.. Especially noteworthy are the *Six Concert Pieces*, Op.38 (Novello) and the *Four Concert Fantasias* (Augener) which includes a 'Paraphrase on Rossini's *Preghiera: 'Giusto Ciel''*, a 'Fantasia on an air by Rode' and the 'Concert March on 'Gorhoffedd gwr Harlech''. Best would appear to have been fond of his various 'Fantasias' based either on operatic music, the national airs of England, Scotland and Denmark or old

English Christmas carols. The influence of the continental organist-composers, such as Lemmens and Lefébure-Wély, can also be discerned in Best's organ music. He wrote a 'storm piece' (*[Fantasia] Pastorale*) which can take its place alongside Lemmens' *Fantasia in E minor* and Lefébure-Wély's *Scène Pastorale (pour une inauguration d'orgue ou messe de minuit)*, all of which probably owe their inspiration to Rossini's Overture to *William Tell*. Of his *Fantasia Pastorale* Best wrote in an analytical note:

The display of an organ of the first proportions is hardly deemed complete without some attempt to realise what is termed 'programme music', as all who have heard the large organs in continental cities can testify. In this fantasia the intention is to portray in sound the quiet repose of rural life, with the shepherd's song and the village dance interrupted by an impending storm. To the effect of the latter the deep bass of the pedal stops of a large organ contribute greatly. The gradual subsiding of the tempest permits the hymn of thanksgiving to be heard in the distance, and the piece is brought to a conclusion with music of the same pastoral character as at the commencement. (*The Choir*, August 1926:145)

Statham (1909:131) was of the opinion that Best's organ compositions generally stood '...somewhat apart from English organ music generally, for they belong rather to the French school than the English; but it is to the French school with a much stronger and more vigorous style about it, and a more complete grasp of the instrument...'. Whilst the contemporary French organist-composers did have influence on Best, he was also receptive to many others, and it should be remembered that he was not uncritical of the various national organ styles of continental Europe.

.....A conversation with Mr. Best on national organ styles is instructive. The modern German style he finds most suitable to the genius of the instrument, but the technical development is too profuse and too long; the music becomes uninteresting from the absence of subsidiary melodious themes. Spohr, in his quartets, re-chewed his themes and neglected the episode. Some of the German organ works should be no more played in public than sol-feggi should be sung in public; they are as ponderous and mechanical as exercises for a degree. The French, on the other hand, are too frivolous, and neglect the contrapuntal style. With the exception, perhaps, of Guilmant and Widor, they do not understand the obligato pedal. Lefébure Wély did little for the pedal, but recent players are overcoming the defect. The Italians have very fine-toned organs, and we get our system of couplers from them, but the crux of the organ, the pedal, is neglected, and their organ style is little better than mediocre pianoforte music..... (*Musical Herald*, January 1890:292&293)

Best remains very much himself and a part of the English organ tradition, both as player and composer. Statham has, however, drawn attention to Best's mastery of the effects possible on the 19th century organ.

These effects fall into two categories. Firstly there are all the colouristic possibilities which were inherent in the 19th century organ in addition to the '*organo pleno*'. These include a wealth of imitative reeds, heavy-pressure reed tone, harmonic flutes, undulating stops, and the depth of tone possible from 16 ft. and 32 ft. stops on the pedal. Technology, in the form of the pneumatic lever, had provided the means for rapidly changing these stops, and also the means for coupling the keyboards to each other and also to the pedals without an increase in the weight of the keys. Secondly, Best was able to devise textures which could make maximum use of these colouristic possibilities. These textures derive in the first instance from those that Best derived from the adapting of orchestral and other textures to the organ keyboard in his series of transcriptions. That Best thought 'orchestrally', even when writing for the organ, is indicated by the fact that he will sometimes give 'orchestral' directions. In the *Pastorale* (Augener, *Cecilia* - Book xix) he writes:

"In this *Pastorale* the Orchestral indications of tone have been preferred as a guide to the organist" even though it began life as the *Allegretto Pastorale*, Op.18 for pianoforte and not as an orchestral movement.

Best possessed a virtuoso keyboard technique, possibly modelled on that of Thalberg (Levien 1942:13), and had developed a pedal technique of similar proportions. He brought this great technical accomplishment to his compositions, combining it with the new organ colours and the textures which his technique made possible, and always '...displaying the organ in its true nature...' (Levien 1942:55). The parallel with Liszt's innovations in pianoforte writing is clear. On the following pages are examples of Best's writing for the organ taken from both his published and manuscript output.

Adagio
Andante Religioso
Andante Religioso

W. T. Best.

Trite Organ
Tramale.
Letalen.

pp
ch. pp
pp

16. 8.
16. 8.
16. 8.

Sm. Diapasons.
16. 8.
16. 8. Sw. to Ped.

228. W. T. Best, manuscript of 'Rêverie Religieuse'
 [Liverpool City Library Dq 1282]

This musical score is for the 'Concert Fantasia on a Welsh March' by W. T. Best, arranged by Augener. It features three staves: Oboe (Oh.), Viola, and Flute (Fl.). The score is written in a key with one flat and a 3/4 time signature. The Oboe part begins with a *p* dynamic and a melodic line. The Viola part has a more rhythmic and textured accompaniment. The Flute part enters with a melodic line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Key markings include *p*, *8 ft.*, *Viola*, *Fl.*, *16, 8.*, *dim.*, *rall.*, *Tempo.*, *sf*, and *Sw.*. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the key signature.

229. W. T. Best, 'Concert Fantasia on a Welsh March'
 [Augener]

First system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains a more complex melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains a bass line. Performance markings include *R.H.*, *L.*, and *mp*. A note in the middle staff is marked with a *p* and has the instruction "(Sub octave coupler on Vox Humana.)" written next to it.

Second system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains a more complex melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains a bass line. Performance markings include *Fl.*, *pp*, *cres.*, *pp*, *(Coupler off.)*, and *mp*. A note in the middle staff is marked with a *p* and has the instruction "(ou.)" written next to it.

Third system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains a more complex melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains a bass line. Performance markings include *Fl.*, *pp*, *Tempo.*, *accel.*, *Piu Lento.*, *cres.*, *p*, *(off.)*, and *Voix Célestes.*

Fourth system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a treble clef and contains a more complex melodic line with slurs and accents. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains a bass line. Performance markings include *p*, *espress.*, and *pp*.

230. W. T. Best, 'Paraphrase on Rossini's Preghiera: 'Giusto Ciel''
[Augener]

88

Andante. $\text{♩} = 88$. *Dolce e vago*

Clarinet solo

Oboe solo

Fl. s. *rit.*

mf

pp

cresc.

a tempo

16.

p

Clar.

pp rit.

mf a tempo

mf

espress. p

cresc.

mf

p

(a due)

Allegretto.

Voix Cui

pp

sw.

p

rit.

p solo

16. 8.

7451

232. W. T. Best, 'Sonata No.2 in D minor - 'Romanza''
[Augener - Cecilia Book xxix]

FESTIVAL - OVERTURE.

B flat major.

W. T. Best.

Andante maestoso $\text{♩} = 60$.
Sw. 16.8.
MANUALE.
Trombe. Sw. Full. Trombe. Sw. Tr. Sw.
PEDALE.
16. p
Sw. Reeds. R.
p 16.8.

Musical notation publisher logo and address: 111, Upper Street, London W.

233. W. T. Best, 'Festival Overture in B flat'
[Augener - Cecilia Book liv]

FANTASIA AND FUGUE.

W. T. Best.

Maestoso. J. = 60.

1.) *Gt. Reeds. 16. 8. 4.* *Full.*

2.) *Reeds. 32. 16. 8.* *Full.*

MANUALE.

3.) *Sw. Reeds. 8.* *mp sf*

ten. ten. ten. ten.

Andante. J. = 56.

(English Psalm Melody. A. D. 1588.)

quasi Arpa.

1.) *pp sw.*

2.) *dim.*

3.) *16.*

4.) *dim. pp*

5.) *pp*

6.) *dim.*

7.) *pp*

8.) *dim.*

9.) *pp*

10.) *dim.*

11.) *pp*

12.) *dim.*

13.) *pp*

14.) *dim.*

15.) *pp*

16.) *dim.*

17.) *pp*

18.) *dim.*

19.) *pp*

20.) *dim.*

21.) *pp*

22.) *dim.*

23.) *pp*

24.) *dim.*

25.) *pp*

26.) *dim.*

27.) *pp*

28.) *dim.*

29.) *pp*

30.) *dim.*

31.) *pp*

32.) *dim.*

33.) *pp*

34.) *dim.*

35.) *pp*

36.) *dim.*

37.) *pp*

38.) *dim.*

39.) *pp*

40.) *dim.*

41.) *pp*

42.) *dim.*

43.) *pp*

44.) *dim.*

45.) *pp*

46.) *dim.*

47.) *pp*

48.) *dim.*

49.) *pp*

50.) *dim.*

51.) *pp*

52.) *dim.*

53.) *pp*

54.) *dim.*

55.) *pp*

56.) *dim.*

57.) *pp*

58.) *dim.*

59.) *pp*

60.) *dim.*

61.) *pp*

62.) *dim.*

63.) *pp*

64.) *dim.*

65.) *pp*

66.) *dim.*

67.) *pp*

68.) *dim.*

69.) *pp*

70.) *dim.*

71.) *pp*

72.) *dim.*

73.) *pp*

74.) *dim.*

75.) *pp*

76.) *dim.*

77.) *pp*

78.) *dim.*

79.) *pp*

80.) *dim.*

81.) *pp*

82.) *dim.*

83.) *pp*

84.) *dim.*

85.) *pp*

86.) *dim.*

87.) *pp*

88.) *dim.*

89.) *pp*

90.) *dim.*

91.) *pp*

92.) *dim.*

93.) *pp*

94.) *dim.*

95.) *pp*

96.) *dim.*

97.) *pp*

98.) *dim.*

99.) *pp*

100.) *dim.*

101.) *pp*

102.) *dim.*

103.) *pp*

104.) *dim.*

105.) *pp*

106.) *dim.*

107.) *pp*

108.) *dim.*

109.) *pp*

110.) *dim.*

111.) *pp*

112.) *dim.*

113.) *pp*

114.) *dim.*

115.) *pp*

116.) *dim.*

117.) *pp*

118.) *dim.*

119.) *pp*

120.) *dim.*

121.) *pp*

122.) *dim.*

123.) *pp*

124.) *dim.*

125.) *pp*

126.) *dim.*

127.) *pp*

128.) *dim.*

129.) *pp*

130.) *dim.*

131.) *pp*

132.) *dim.*

133.) *pp*

134.) *dim.*

135.) *pp*

136.) *dim.*

137.) *pp*

138.) *dim.*

139.) *pp*

140.) *dim.*

141.) *pp*

142.) *dim.*

143.) *pp*

144.) *dim.*

145.) *pp*

146.) *dim.*

147.) *pp*

148.) *dim.*

149.) *pp*

150.) *dim.*

151.) *pp*

152.) *dim.*

153.) *pp*

154.) *dim.*

155.) *pp*

156.) *dim.*

157.) *pp*

158.) *dim.*

159.) *pp*

160.) *dim.*

161.) *pp*

162.) *dim.*

163.) *pp*

164.) *dim.*

165.) *pp*

166.) *dim.*

167.) *pp*

168.) *dim.*

169.) *pp*

170.) *dim.*

171.) *pp*

172.) *dim.*

173.) *pp*

174.) *dim.*

175.) *pp*

176.) *dim.*

177.) *pp*

178.) *dim.*

179.) *pp*

180.) *dim.*

181.) *pp*

182.) *dim.*

183.) *pp*

184.) *dim.*

185.) *pp*

186.) *dim.*

187.) *pp*

188.) *dim.*

189.) *pp*

190.) *dim.*

191.) *pp*

192.) *dim.*

193.) *pp*

194.) *dim.*

195.) *pp*

196.) *dim.*

197.) *pp*

198.) *dim.*

199.) *pp*

200.) *dim.*

201.) *pp*

202.) *dim.*

203.) *pp*

204.) *dim.*

205.) *pp*

206.) *dim.*

207.) *pp*

208.) *dim.*

209.) *pp*

210.) *dim.*

211.) *pp*

212.) *dim.*

213.) *pp*

214.) *dim.*

215.) *pp*

216.) *dim.*

217.) *pp*

218.) *dim.*

219.) *pp*

220.) *dim.*

221.) *pp*

222.) *dim.*

223.) *pp*

224.) *dim.*

225.) *pp*

226.) *dim.*

227.) *pp*

228.) *dim.*

229.) *pp*

230.) *dim.*

231.) *pp*

232.) *dim.*

233.) *pp*

234.) *dim.*

235.) *pp*

236.) *dim.*

237.) *pp*

238.) *dim.*

239.) *pp*

240.) *dim.*

241.) *pp*

242.) *dim.*

243.) *pp*

244.) *dim.*

245.) *pp*

246.) *dim.*

247.) *pp*

248.) *dim.*

249.) *pp*

250.) *dim.*

251.) *pp*

252.) *dim.*

253.) *pp*

254.) *dim.*

255.) *pp*

256.) *dim.*

257.) *pp*

258.) *dim.*

259.) *pp*

260.) *dim.*

261.) *pp*

262.) *dim.*

263.) *pp*

264.) *dim.*

265.) *pp*

266.) *dim.*

267.) *pp*

268.) *dim.*

269.) *pp*

270.) *dim.*

271.) *pp*

272.) *dim.*

273.) *pp*

274.) *dim.*

275.) *pp*

276.) *dim.*

277.) *pp*

278.) *dim.*

279.) *pp*

280.) *dim.*

281.) *pp*

282.) *dim.*

283.) *pp*

284.) *dim.*

285.) *pp*

286.) *dim.*

287.) *pp*

288.) *dim.*

289.) *pp*

290.) *dim.*

291.) *pp*

292.) *dim.*

293.) *pp*

294.) *dim.*

295.) *pp*

296.) *dim.*

297.) *pp*

298.) *dim.*

299.) *pp*

300.) *dim.*

301.) *pp*

302.) *dim.*

303.) *pp*

304.) *dim.*

305.) *pp*

306.) *dim.*

307.) *pp*

308.) *dim.*

309.) *pp*

310.) *dim.*

311.) *pp*

312.) *dim.*

313.) *pp*

314.) *dim.*

315.) *pp*

316.) *dim.*

317.) *pp*

318.) *dim.*

319.) *pp*

320.) *dim.*

321.) *pp*

322.) *dim.*

323.) *pp*

324.) *dim.*

325.) *pp*

326.) *dim.*

327.) *pp*

328.) *dim.*

329.) *pp*

330.) *dim.*

331.) *pp*

332.) *dim.*

333.) *pp*

334.) *dim.*

335.) *pp*

336.) *dim.*

337.) *pp*

338.) *dim.*

339.) *pp*

340.) *dim.*

341.) *pp*

342.) *dim.*

343.) *pp*

344.) *dim.*

345.) *pp*

346.) *dim.*

347.) *pp*

348.) *dim.*

349.) *pp*

350.) *dim.*

351.) *pp*

352.) *dim.*

353.) *pp*

354.) *dim.*

355.) *pp*

356.) *dim.*

357.) *pp*

358.) *dim.*

359.) *pp*

360.) *dim.*

361.) *pp*

362.) *dim.*

363.) *pp*

364.) *dim.*

365.) *pp*

366.) *dim.*

367.) *pp*

368.) *dim.*

369.) *pp*

370.) *dim.*

371.) *pp*

372.) *dim.*

373.) *pp*

374.) *dim.*

375.) *pp*

376.) *dim.*

377.) *pp*

378.) *dim.*

379.) *pp*

380.) *dim.*

381.) *pp*

382.) *dim.*

383.) *pp*

384.) *dim.*

385.) *pp*

386.) *dim.*

387.) *pp*

388.) *dim.*

389.) *pp*

390.) *dim.*

391.) *pp*

392.) *dim.*

393.) *pp*

394.) *dim.*

395.) *pp*

396.) *dim.*

397.) *pp*

398.) *dim.*

399.) *pp*

400.) *dim.*

401.) *pp*

402.) *dim.*

403.) *pp*

404.) *dim.*

405.) *pp*

406.) *dim.*

407.) *pp*

408.) *dim.*

409.) *pp*

410.) *dim.*

411.) *pp*

412.) *dim.*

413.) *pp*

414.) *dim.*

415.) *pp*

416.) *dim.*

417.) *pp*

418.) *dim.*

419.) *pp*

420.) *dim.*

421.) *pp*

422.) *dim.*

423.) *pp*

424.) *dim.*

425.) *pp*

426.) *dim.*

427.) *pp*

428.) *dim.*

429.) *pp*

430.) *dim.*

431.) *pp*

432.) *dim.*

433.) *pp*

434.) *dim.*

435.) *pp*

436.) *dim.*

437.) *pp*

438.) *dim.*

439.) *pp*

440.) *dim.*

441.) *pp*

442.) *dim.*

443.) *pp*

444.) *dim.*

445.) *pp*

446.) *dim.*

447.) *pp*

448.) *dim.*

449.) *pp*

450.) *dim.*

451.) *pp*

452.) *dim.*

453.) *pp*

454.) *dim.*

455.) *pp*

456.) *dim.*

457.) *pp*

458.) *dim.*

459.) *pp*

460.) *dim.*

461.) *pp*

462.) *dim.*

463.) *pp*

464.) *dim.*

465.) *pp*

466.) *dim.*

467.) *pp*

468.) *dim.*

469.) *pp*

470.) *dim.*

471.) *pp*

472.) *dim.*

473.) *pp*

474.) *dim.*

475.) *pp*

476.) *dim.*

477.) *pp*

478.) *dim.*

479.) *pp*

480.) *dim.*

481.) *pp*

482.) *dim.*

483.) *pp*

484.) *dim.*

485.) *pp*

486.) *dim.*

487.) *pp*

488.) *dim.*

489.) *pp*

490.) *dim.*

491.) *pp*

492.) *dim.*

493.) *pp*

494.) *dim.*

495.) *pp*

496.) *dim.*

497.) *pp*

498.) *dim.*

499.) *pp*

500.) *dim.*

501.) *pp*

502.) *dim.*

503.) *pp*

504.) *dim.*

505.) *pp*

506.) *dim.*

507.) *pp*

508.) *dim.*

509.) *pp*

510.) *dim.*

511.) *pp*

512.) *dim.*

513.) *pp*

514.) *dim.*

515.) *pp*

516.) *dim.*

517.) *pp*

518.) *dim.*

519.) *pp*

520.) *dim.*

521.) *pp*

522.) *dim.*

523.) *pp*

524.) *dim.*

525.) *pp*

526.) *dim.*

527.) *pp*

528.) *dim.*

529.) *pp*

530.) *dim.*

531.) *pp*

532.) *dim.*

533.) *pp*

534.) *dim.*

535.) *pp*

536.) *dim.*

537.) *pp*

538.) *dim.*

539.) *pp*

540.) *dim.*

541.) *pp*

542.) *dim.*

543.) *pp*

544.) *dim.*

545.) *pp*

546.) *dim.*

547.) *pp*

548.) *dim.*

549.) *pp*

550.) *dim.*

551.) *pp*

552.) *dim.*

553.) *pp*

554.) *dim.*

555.) *pp*

556.) *dim.*

557.) *pp*

558.) *dim.*

559.) *pp*

560.) *dim.*

561.) *pp*

562.) *dim.*

563.) *pp*

564.) *dim.*

565.) *pp*

566.) *dim.*

567.) *pp*

568.) *dim.*

569.) *pp*

570.) *dim.*

571.) *pp*

572.) *dim.*

573.) *pp*

574.) *dim.*

575.) *pp*

576.) *dim.*

577.) *pp*

578.) *dim.*

579.) *pp*

580.) *dim.*

581.) *pp*

582.) *dim.*

583.) *pp*

584.) *dim.*

585.) *pp*

586.) *dim.*

587.) *pp*

588.) *dim.*

589.) *pp*

590.) *dim.*

591.) *pp*

592.) *dim.*

593.) *pp*

594.) *dim.*

595.) *pp*

596.) *dim.*

597.) *pp*

598.) *dim.*

599.) *pp*

600.) *dim.*

601.) *pp*

602.) *dim.*

603.) *pp*

604.) *dim.*

605.) *pp*

606.) *dim.*

607.) *pp*

608.) *dim.*

609.) *pp*

610.) *dim.*

611.) *pp*

612.) *dim.*

613.) *pp*

614.) *dim.*

615.) *pp*

616.) *dim.*

617.) *pp*

618.) *dim.*

619.) *pp*

620.) *dim.*

621.) *pp*

622.) *dim.*

623.) *pp*

624.) *dim.*

625.) *pp*

626.) *dim.*

627.) *pp*

628.) *dim.*

629.) *pp*

630.) *dim.*

631.) *pp*

632.) *dim.*

633.) *pp*

634.) *dim.*

635.) *pp*

636.) *dim.*

637.) *pp*

638.) *dim.*

639.) *pp*

640.) *dim.*

641.) *pp*

642.) *dim.*

643.) *pp*

644.) *dim.*

645.) *pp*

646.) *dim.*

647.) *pp*

648.) *dim.*

649.) *pp*

650.) *dim.*

651.) *pp*

652.) *dim.*

653.) *pp*

654.) *dim.*

655.) *pp*

656.) *dim.*

657.) *pp*

658.) *dim.*

659.) *pp*

660.) *dim.*

661.) *pp*

662.) *dim.*

663.) *pp*

664.) *dim.*

665.) *pp*

666.) *dim.*

667.) *pp*

668.) *dim.*

669.) *pp*

670.) *dim.*

671.) *pp*

672.) *dim.*

673.) *pp*

674.) *dim.*

675.) *pp*

676.) *dim.*

677.) *pp*

678.) *dim.*

679.) *pp*

680.) *dim.*

681.) *pp*

682.) *dim.*

683.) *pp*

684.) *dim.*

685.) *pp*

686.) *dim.*

687.) *pp*

688.) *dim.*

689.) *pp*

690.) *dim.*

691.) *pp*

692.) *dim.*

693.) *pp*

694.) *dim.*

695.) *pp*

696.) *dim.*

697.) *pp*

698.) *dim.*

699.) *pp*

700.) *dim.*

701.) *pp*

702.) *dim.*

703.) *pp*

704.) *dim.*

705.) *pp*

706.) *dim.*

707.) *pp*

708.) *dim.*

709.) *pp*

710.) *dim.*

711.) *pp*

712.) *dim.*

713.) *pp*

714.) *dim.*

715.) *pp*

716.) *dim.*

717.) *pp*

718.) *dim.*

719.) *pp*

720.) *dim.*

721.) *pp*

722.) *dim.*

723.) *pp*

724.) *dim.*

725.) *pp*

726.) *dim.*

727.) *pp*

728.) *dim.*

729.) *pp*

730.) *dim.*

731.) *pp*

732.) *dim.*

733.) *pp*

734.) *dim.*

735.) *pp*

736.) *dim.*

737.) *pp*

738.) *dim.*

739.) *pp*

740.) *dim.*

741.) *pp*

742.) *dim.*

743.) *pp*

744.) *dim.*

745.) *pp*

746.) *dim.*

747.) *pp*

748.) *dim.*

749.) *pp*

750.) *dim.*

751.) *pp*

752.) *dim.*

753.) *pp*

754.) *dim.*

755.) *pp*

756.) *dim.*

757.) *pp*

758.) *dim.*

759.) *pp*

76

Allegretto brillante. ($\text{♩} = 126$)

VAR. III.
Ch. mf

Open Diapason.

mf Octave Flute, 4.

Gt.

Ch.

16.8.

Gt.

Ch.

ten.

Gt.

Ch.

Gt.

Ch.

Gt.

Ch.

7320

235. W. T. Best, 'Andante with variations'
[Augener - Cecilia Book xxviii]

("Plaintive Martyrs" - Burns.)

"GIVE EAR, THOU JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH:"

— 1562.

No. 4. *Lugubre, ma non troppo lento.*

Ch. Bassoon and Flute, s.
Gt. Diapasons, s. combined
with Sw. Reeds, 16. s.

Theme in the Soprano.

Temperley (1985, Vol.xvi:xviii) described Best as one of Britain's '...most promising composers...' for the pianoforte, regretting that in later years he concentrated on composing '...relatively conventional...' music for the organ. Although Best may have used the traditional forms, he was an innovative composer for the organ in many ways. He was a man of great natural musical talents, with an original turn of mind. If Best had not become a professional concert performer, and, in addition, an editor and transcriber, and had devoted all his energies and considerable skill and musicianship to composition alone, he may well have become one of the more significant composers of the 19th century. His legacy as a player, editor, transcriber and composer is considerable, and his position as one of the great performers of the century is assured. His additional achievements, in these other areas of musical endeavour, entitle him to be described as '...the Paganini, the Liszt and the Berlioz of the organ...' (Levien 1942 - *Preface*)

CHAPTER 20

CONCLUSION – W. T. BEST AND THE SPIRIT OF VICTORIAN ENTERPRISE

.....The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual.....
(Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, 1859)

.....The principal mark of genius is not perfection but originality, the opening of new frontiers.....
(Arthur Koestler)

Briggs (1954:24) describes the year 1851 as '...the climax of early Victorian England...' and '...the turning point of the century...'. The Great Exhibition was planned and executed by men of vision and genius. Joseph Paxton, the designer of the Crystal Palace, which housed the Exhibition, was described by John Summerson as '...a type of creator as new and as characteristic of the Age as the building he designed...' (Briggs 1954:44). Paxton's career was the epitome of the Victorian concept of 'self-help', and showed how those from the humblest of origins could, by dint of hard work, rise to the highest grades of society.

The Exhibition itself celebrated the triumphs of industrialisation, and their application to the arts, crafts and industry. The Exhibition also had a moral purpose, it was to be a '...running commentary on the age...' (Briggs 1954:29), with one of its major themes being the ethic of 'work'. As well as display, its purpose was also to educate. After the Exhibition, the Crystal Palace was re-erected in an enlarged form at Sydenham, and became a centre for exhibitions, with a series of 'fine arts' courts and a natural history collection. It was also used for concerts, and, in particular, it was the venue for the triennial Handel Festivals, which became '...a kind of nationalistic substitute for religious experience...' (Mellers 1946:99). The whole spirit of Victorian enterprise - work, self-help, vision, the desire to be progressive, delight in the advances made possible by the 'Industrial Revolution', the idea that by the means of education the evils of society could be eradicated - is encapsulated in the Great Exhibition of 1851, the building in which it took place, and the 'progressive visionaries' who planned and executed it.

Among the 'men of 1851' was William Thomas Best. The Great Exhibition was the springboard from which his career took flight. The instrument upon which he made his name at the Great Exhibition, built by the young Henry Willis, incorporated the latest developments in technology, which Best was able to exploit in an original way, and thus open up new frontiers in the playing of, and writing for, the instrument. Best was a self-made man, '...no one's pupil but his own...' (Statham 1909:244), and as he himself put it '...a man is what he makes himself to be...' (Hollins 1936:168). From very ordinary origins in Carlisle, by means of hard work and 'self-help', Best became the greatest organist of the 19th century and the

originator of a new style of playing and approach to the instrument. His subsequent posts, at the *Royal Panopticon of Science and Art*, as civic organist at *St. George's Hall, Liverpool*, the *Royal Albert Hall*, the *Handel Festivals*, the *Liverpool Philharmonic Society*, and his work as a recitalist, church organist, editor, arranger and composer, and with the choral movement, involved him with the 'spirit of Victorian enterprise' in many of its manifestations. W. T. Best could lay claim to be the most 'eminent' of Victorians. His importance, however, extended beyond this. As a musician he has his place as the greatest organist of the 19th century.