

about their play, and the kind of things said and done therein; . . . and they informed him that Athanasius was their bishop and director, and that he had baptized some of the lads who were unchristened. Of these Alexander made careful inquiry what had been asked of them or done to them by him who was priest in their name, and what they answered and were taught to say. And finding that all the order of the Church had been accurately observed in their case, he deemed, on consulting with the priests about him, that there was no need to re-baptize such as had once for all received the grace of God in simplicity. Only he performed for them the other ceremonies which the priests alone may lawfully minister in the Sacraments. Moreover, Athanasius and the other boys, who in their sport were priests and deacons, he commended to their respective kinsmen, calling God to witness, to be nurtured for the Church, and trained to that which they had enacted.'—SOZOMEN, *Eccles. Hist.* i. 17.

S. R. H. N.

The Agony on the Cross.

SIR,—It has become a fashion of late to speak of 'The Three Hours' Agony,' and I believe services have been compiled bearing that title and intended to last for that time. But surely the agony lasted *six* hours and not three only. St. Mark is clear on this point: 'It was the third hour, and they crucified Him' (xv. 25). 'And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried, &c.' (v. 33, 34). There can, therefore, be no doubt that Jesus was on the cross from the third to the ninth hour of the day. Is there any reason for thinking that His 'agony' did not commence until the sixth hour? For the last two years I have distributed the Seven Last Words over the whole six hours, but I should like to know if I have been wrong.

A. H. HAMILTON.

SIR,—Will any of the readers of *Church Bells* kindly inform me what beverage is provided for the performers at parochial concerts in those parishes where the Church-of-England Temperance Society is at work? The scent of coffee makes it objectionable, and tea is bad for the voice.

R. M.

THE REV. W. KILDahl, Townsville, North Queensland, is requested to say whether he has regularly received *Church Bells*.

'J.'—The view of the Church of England on the validity of baptism by a baptized layman is discussed in an interesting manner in Blunt's *Duties of the Parish Priest*, Lecture x. Hooker also deals with the question at some length, but neither of them ventures to speak with absolute positiveness on the matter.

'H. K.' has raised a question of too great intricacy and difficulty to be treated in these columns. We can only refer her to commentators (who, however, will be found at variance on the subject), to Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, and to other similar works.

JOHN SPENCER.—If you like to send a good photograph of the church named, and an account of it, we will consider whether it is suitable.

'J. L. G.'—We have forwarded your letter to our reviewer.

RECEIVED ALSO.—M. A. Nicholl; H. Sharrock; S. R. H. N.; Cornubia; and others.

BELLS AND BELL-RINGING.

Where are the Finest Bells?

SIR,—In my letter published March 2nd, asking where are the best bells, I naturally expected very wide answers, knowing that many persons become so accustomed to the sounds they constantly hear that they really believe there is nothing else so good. I now wish to make a few remarks after reading the very sensible letter from Charles D. P. Davies in your last issue. I have only lately given my attention to the subject of bells, but I know from long experience in other matters that comparison is the only true test. I think, however, it may be admitted that a ring of bells should form something of an equivalent to the strings of a pianoforte, or the diapason of an organ, or any other musical sounds which form the groundwork of an instrument, and which tone has to be heard oftenest and for the greatest length of time. Such sounds must possess certain harmonies in certain proportions to be pleasant, and I quite agree with Mr. Davies, that I do not feel the bell-founders of the last hundred years have been right in trying to get the treble and tenor so extra large and out of proportion with the others that they should 'commence with a crash and finish with a bang.' Supposing it to be bearable for round-ringing, it cannot be right for changes. I believe, as far as my small experience has gone, that a ring of bells should have a properly proportioned scale, the same as a keyed musical instrument. I think the older bell-founders took somewhat this view, as their scales appear to have been better managed.

Perhaps the greatest evil of all is in the fact that, in most rings, two bells of an exactly corresponding curve cannot be found, for which reason bells are often more out of harmony than out of tune (by which I mean, do not correspond with each other in their harmonic tones). I know a ring of ten, having a fair repute, cast by an eminent firm, the scale of which being put upon a rod shows itself to be of the very worst description: a large, thick, fluty treble; third and fourth within a quarter of an inch of the same size, the fourth being hacked to pieces to flatten it to something like its note; the ninth and tenth twice the proper distance apart they should be, to correspond with the eighth and ninth; the ninth very fluty; and the eighth and tenth crazy in the extreme.

A LOVER OF GOOD BELLS.

Reply to Mr. Davies.

SIR,—It is curious and somewhat amusing to note the high character and splendid musical properties awarded to many rings of bells throughout the country by the inhabitants of the respective parishes which may be fortunate

enough to possess them. 'Our bells are one of the finest peals in England!' I have often heard remarked by those who were living in blissful ignorance of the defects of the molten voices of their parish steeples; and the weight and measurement of the bells, especially the former, are frequently the subjects of great exaggeration by uninformed persons, creating, in many instances, no small wonder and amazement amongst their auditors.

It is the prevailing opinion that the most musical ring of twelve is at St. Michael's, Cornhill, which vies with St. Peter's of Norwich in beauty of tone; and none of the recent 'twelves' are said to be so grand a peal as the one in question. For a ring of ten, those at St. Michael's, Coventry, surpass all I have heard, and old ringers, who are more competent to form an opinion than I am, agree with me in this respect. For rings of eight, St. Botolph, Aldgate, St. Stephen, Westminster, and St. John, South Hackney, are said to be very harmonious. I have frequently heard of the Lavenham Bells, the tenor of which is said to be a most extraordinary bell; but her companions not coming up to her standard, the exceedingly beautiful tone of the tenor is somewhat marred. This, however, I am not prepared to maintain, as I merely get the information secondhand.

I quite agree with Mr. Davies that the ring at Pershore Abbey are indeed splendid bells. Of this I can speak from personal experience, having spent a pleasant hour or two in the belfry. One of the most peculiar ringing-chambers—if chamber it can, indeed, be called—exists in this steeple. Each of the floors, right up to the one immediately beneath the bells, has been taken out of the tower, and to prevent the ringers standing in the porch, a veritable cage, consisting of wood and ironwork, is placed at a respectful distance from the bells, and the ringers, being in a position able to be witnessed by the clergy and congregation, seem to be literally suspended from the ceiling above them. A most complicated mode of ascent is required to get into this cage, appalling to those timorous and nervous mortals who may have a tendency to labour under their own obesity. The ring of eight at St. Helen's, in the city of Worcester, has always been considered a most musical octave; but this being the place where I essayed my infant skill, I had better leave to some one else, who may perhaps be more impartial, to sing their praises. It may be noted, that upon each of these bells appears a rhythmical couplet commemorative of the victories obtained by Marlborough in the reign of Anne. They are said to be a maiden peal.

With regard to the questions which Mr. Davies asks concerning the 5012 Grandsire Triples, I beg to inform him that in Shipway's *Art of Ringing* he will find a peal of the same number by Mr. Stephen Hill, of Kidderminster, but that peal has a peculiar kind of 'Single.' I know of no other peal, nor has there been one produced yet, without a variation in some way or other from the ordinary 'Bob.' I am of opinion, however, that the condition of the courses of the changes in Grandsire Triples does not preclude the possibility of an entire peal being produced by 'Bobs' only, though as yet this point has never been attained.

HARVEY REEVES.

Muffled Peal at St. James's, Tong, Yorkshire.

ON Tuesday, 12th inst., a deeply muffled peal of 720 changes of Oxford Treble Bob was rung in 26 mins., at the above church, as a tribute of respect to the memory of a late ringer of the Company, Edward Oddy, of Bowling, near Bradford. T. Roberts, 1; W. Sugden, 2; E. Webster, 3; J. Ross, 4; G. Carter (conductor), 5; G. Bolland, 6. Tenor, 12 cwt.

Change-ringing at Ashchurch, Gloucestershire.

ON Tuesday, 19th inst., the Ashchurch Society of Change-ringers rang 720 Grandsire Minor in 25 mins. T. Hampton, 1; W. Hampton, 2; T. Cummings, 3; C. Slatter, 4; T. Bayliss, 5; E. Wallace (conductor), 6. This is the first peal of the four first-named ringers, who are all under twenty-one, and the first peal of the Society, which has only been ringing five weeks.

Change-ringing by the Yorkshire Association at Ilkley.

ON Wednesday, 20th inst., during the ceremony of the consecration of the cemetery at Ilkley by the Bishop of Ripon, the Society rang 5040 changes of Bob Triples, in 2 hrs. 55 mins. 33 secs. J. Beaulands, 1; E. Batty, 2; J. Lockwood, 3; R. Tuke, 4; H. Hubbard, jun., 5; T. Lockwood, 6; J. W. Snowden, 7; A. Critchley, 8. The peal was composed by the late B. Annable, and conducted by Tom Lockwood. Tenor, 18 cwt.

Ancient Society of College Youths.

ON Thursday, 21st inst., the late Mr. John Holt's original one-part peal of Grandsire Triples, comprising 5040 changes, was rung at St. Matthew's, Upper Clapton, London, in 2 hrs. 59 mins. F. Rumens (first peal), 1; E. Clark, 2; J. Carmichael (first peal), 3; W. G. Clark, 4; R. Turner (first peal), 5; C. H. Jessop, 6; J. Pettitt (conductor), 7; H. Page, 8.

[Cannot our belfry friends, in London and elsewhere, practise a little self-denial during Lent, as is being done by other eminent ringers in the North?—An example worthy of imitation.—Ed.]

Durham Diocesan Association of Ringers.

ON Tuesday, 26th inst., eight members of the North Shields Branch of the above Association rang on Christ Church bells, North Shields, a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples in 45 mins. R. Smith, 1; J. Gibson, 2; W. H. Park, 3; W. Waugh, 4; J. Coulson, 5; W. Reed (conductor), 6; R. Armstrong, 7; S. Knott, 8. Tenor, 19 cwt.

Ringling at St. Mary's, Nottingham.

WE omitted to mention, in our last issue, that our correspondent regretted that the ringing should have taken place in Lent, but it was to celebrate the centenary of a great peal rung on the same date in 1778.

NOTICE.—The author of 'Long Lengths' is requested to send his name and address, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

RECEIVED ALSO.—Bob Major; Timothy; X. Y. Z. (without any name); T. Wylde; C. Gregory; F. Osam; E. Matthews; A. Robeson; H. Bastable. Editors have the privilege of refusing, selecting, and abridging, as they think most suitable to their publications.