

CHIMES AND CHIMERS.

The New Fifth Avenue Carillon.

On the 1st of July, 1745, the old collegiate town of Louvain, in Belgium, was early astir; and its good citizens, arrayed in holiday costume, poured out from every door and joined the crowd of visitors, among whom were many of the most famous Belgian musicians—connoisseurs and amateurs—who had come to listen to the efforts of the competitors for the important post of *carillonneur*, or chimer, at St. Peter's Church. There were five applicants for the position, which was to be given to the best performer. Great pains had been taken to make the trial perfectly fair, three pieces having been selected, which were to be played at sight and in the order indicated by the slips, which the performers were to draw by lot, so that the judges might not know who was playing at any particular time.

Although M. Loret, who played first, did exceedingly well, and the skill of M. Van Driessche, who played third, was much admired, nevertheless the decision was in favor of the fifth and last performer, who turned out to be Matthias Van den Gheyn, then only twenty four years old, afterwards, perhaps, the most celebrated *carillonneur* and organist in Belgium.

These *carillons* were played with a clavecin, or key board arranged before the performer in semi tones similar to an organ. Only in place of striking the keys with his fingers the performer struck a sharp blow on each note with his fist guarded by a leather covering. Although one might think that, owing to this apparently cumbersome manner of playing, none but the simplest music could be performed; still the *morceaux fugues* of Van den Gheyn (fifty compositions, by the way, which narrowly escaped being lost), which he played on the bells of St. Peter's, are associated by many persons with the fugues of Bach and Handel, and are elaborate even when played upon the piano. Potthoff, a blind organist and *carillon* player, of Amsterdam, executed fugues and difficult airs on bells with wonderful skill notwithstanding that every key required a force equal to the weight of two pounds.

Although the interest in bell-playing has almost passed away with the art, we should not be surprised if a decided interest were awakened in this city on the subject by an experiment which will probably be tried with a chime of bells to be hung in the tower of St. Thomas Church, on Fifth Avenue. This chime is the gift of Mr. T. H. Waiter, of West Forty-sixth street as a memorial of his father, and is said to be so fine and will become so well known from being the only "up-town" chime, and especially as its tones will soon grow familiar to the throng who will pass it in going to and from the Park, that the following brief description of these bells, which we find in the *Troy Times* of June 23, may not prove uninteresting.

George W. Warren, the distinguished organist and director of music at St. Thomas Church, New York, is in this city the guest of the Rev. Dr. Tucker. Mr. Warren is here to inspect and give the final test to a chime of bells which the Messrs. Meneely have been making for St. Thomas's Church, and yesterday afternoon he, with a number of invited friends, visited the West Troy foundry for that purpose. The chime consists of ten bells, the tenor or heaviest bell weighs some twenty-eight hundred pounds, and is tuned to E flat, concert pitch. The whole chime weighs between ten and eleven thousand pounds. The bells were tested to the satisfaction of all present and drew forth from Mr. Warren and Rev. Dr. Tucker terms of highest praise, not only for the richness and purity of tone, but also for the uniform quality of the same, and the wonderful evenness of the scale. The Messrs. Meneely must be highly gratified to receive such strong encomiums from two so thorough and competent judges, and it is without doubt, one of the most perfect chimes ever cast in this country.

Mr. Warren has taken great care that this chime shall be in tune and accord with the organ. A large tuning-fork was made, by his request, at the foundry, and then tuned to phalharmonic pitch by the Chickering's. The Messrs. Meneely have tuned the bells exactly with the fork, and have taken even more than their usual pains with the scale of the bells and the casting, fully appreciating that a perfect chime in the tower of the handsome Church of St. Thomas will materially add to their reputation as leading bell makers.

The organist, Mr. Warren, hopes, in addition to the ordinary manner of ringing the bells, to have them connected with the organ by electric action, that the chime may take its part in the carol music of Christmas and Easter. To this end Mr. H. L. Roosevelt, the well known organ builder and electrician, has devised a scheme which he guarantees will be a perfect success if adopted by the vestry. It consists of a little key board, placed conveniently to the right hand of the organist, a cable of eleven insulated wires running from the same to the bell-chamber in the tower. There would be an electro-pneumatic apparatus in the chamber under the bells, including ordinary organ bellows, a high pressure and ten small pneumatic bellows, one for each bell, the electric throb sent from the organ key board being sufficient to expand the small bellows (exactly as with organ pneumatic key action), making a strong and direct stroke of twelve inches or more, and with any rapidity of rhythm that the bell-music might require. Mr. Roosevelt, who, we believe, is the inventor and patentee of this kind of electric action, successfully applied it in connecting the two organs in St. Thomas's Church four years ago, and we trust his plan will have a fair trial, for certainly the musical and church-going public will be much interested in the carrying out of so interesting an experiment.