

into a state of disorder, and church-music and singing generally were gradually reduced to a most unedifying condition. The melodies were most frequently in the plain-song, but the duet- or quint-song was often used both in church, at family worship, and on other occasions, though it has now been almost completely ousted by the harmonic song of the major-minor mode.

Icelandic folk melodies are constructed in one or the other of the old church-modes, but the one most frequently met with in these popular pieces is the Lydian mode, as it is best suited to the quint-song. (On Icelandic folk melodies see: Bj. Thorsteinsson: *Íslensk Thjóðlög*, published in Copenhagen 1906—1909).

Progress towards modern music, vocal as well as instrumental, did not begin till the nineteenth century. This was partly owing to the isolation of the country, but doubtless more to the lack of suitable instruments on which to play the foreign melodies that found their way to the country. Of native musical instruments only two are known. They were very primitive, a kind of oblong boxes, one a form of the fiddle, having 2—4 strings, the other was the so-called *langspil*, with three strings. Both these instruments were placed on a table and played with a bow. The melody was played on one string, and the others were scraped with the bow to produce harmonic sounds.

In the nineteenth century the old melodies to which the church-hymns had been sung for centuries, were gradually replaced by modern ones, mostly of foreign origin. Pioneers in this field were *Pétur Guðjohnsen* (1812—1877) and *Jónas Helgason* (1839—1903), organists in the cathedral in Reykjavík, who did much to create interest in church and secular music, both vocal and instrumental. In the late 'fifties' three-part and four-part singing began to be practised, and about 1860 the first chorus was formed. Now choral unions are to be found all over the country, and every church has its harmonium.

Though musical life in Iceland developed very late, great progress has been made during the last fifty years or so. Musical instruments, as the harmonium, the pianoforte, the guitar, the violin, are now in common use. Windbands have been formed in all the larger towns and a symphony-orchestra in Reykjavík. Of late years, too, Icelandic composers (mostly of vocal music) have appeared, as *Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson* (1847—1927) who resided for a number of years in Edinburgh, Scotland, where most of his works were published; *Sigfús Einarsson* (b. 1877) the present organist in the cathedral in Reykjavík has, besides original compositions, published various Icelandic folk