

Hopkins on Harmony
Letter to Bridges, 1884

I have some musical matters to speak of: Stainer has written a capital Treatise on Harmony which has earned him the heartfelt thanks of people as ignorant as myself (I cannot say his Novello.. Primer of the same earned them) and of others, I believe, not ignorant at all. For instance Sir Robert Stewart, learned musician of this city, much given to Purcell, Handel, and Bach says it is the most scientific treatment he has seen. Though his theory is not final, it is a great step forward and has quite a daylight, a grand *jour*, of sense. I am sure Stainer must be very nice to know and meet.

I have a great light on the matter of harmony myself; new, I need not say (framed on the model of Mr. Pecksniff's 'pagan, I regret to say'); true, I hope.

You saw and liked some music of mine to Mr. Patmore's *Crocus*. The harmony came in the end to be very elaborate and difficult. I sent it through my cousin to Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley for censure and that censure I am awaiting.

Before leaving Stonyhurst I began some music, Gregorian, in the natural scale of A, to Collins' *Ode to Evening*. Quickened by the heavenly beauty of that poem I groped in my soul's very viscera for the tune and thrummed the sweetest and most secret catgut of the mind. What came out was very strange and wild and (I thought) very good. Here I began to harmonise it, and the effect of harmony well in keeping upon that strange mode (which, though it is, as far as notes go, the same as the descending minor, has a character of which the word minor gives you little notion) was so delightful that it seems to me (and I think you would find the same) as near a new world of musical enjoyment as in this old world we could hope to be. To the novelty of effect the rhythm and a continued suspense natural to the mode and easy to carry further contribute too. It is meant for a solo and a double choir singing in unison, the organ or a string band bearing all the harmony. It is in three movements, something like a glee, the third returning to the first.