

CORRESPONDENCE

THE TIERCE DE PICARDIE.

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

SIR,

It must seem very ungracious of an author to take exception to so kindly a notice as your reviewer gives to my edition of carols and the Calvin Psalter.

But, although an author has no right to challenge a reviewer on matters of opinion, he has every right to do so on questions of fact.

In criticising my harmonies your reviewer says : ' the over-use of the *tierce de Picardie* is unnecessary and irritating . . . But perhaps it is a matter of taste.' To which I reply :

(1) The *tierce de Picardie* means the presence of a *major third* in the concluding chord of a composition where the normal note of the scale would make a *minor third* with the Final.

(2) In modern music it means finishing with a major chord a piece of music which is in a minor key. Its employment by modern composers (notably Bach) has always been ' a matter of taste.'

(3) In *modal* music it means something quite different and its employment is not a matter of taste but is subject to a very rigid rule.

(4) The carols, etc., to which your reviewer takes exception are in *Modes* and not in *keys*. My vocal parts are therefore written in modal counterpoint; they are not ' harmonies ' in the modern sense of the word.

(5) One of the strictest rules of modal part-writing is that the final chord of certain Modes *must* contain either the major third (to which your reviewer objects) or the bare fifth.

(6) I obeyed this rule. To have ignored it would have been as great a solecism and as damning a sign of (musical) illiteracy as it would be to conclude a verbal sentence without a full stop.

I am sorry that your reviewer finds obedience to this rule ' unnecessary and irritating,' but really his quarrel should be with Palestrina's ghost rather than with

Yours faithfully,

R. R. TERRY.