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CHAPTER I

Lincoln

AS WITH so much in Reginald Goodall's life an air of mystery surrounds the date of his birth. According to his passport he was born in 1902, but the correct date is 13 July 1901. Goodall himself was to blame for the confusion. In the earlier part of his career he would adjust his age to suit the circumstances. When applying for conducting jobs, he might add a few years, to suggest greater maturity and experience than he possessed. Sometimes he took a few years off. Sometimes, it seems, he so confused himself that he could not remember how old he actually was. According to his marriage certificate he was 28 when he married in 1932. In fact he was 31 – just a few months younger than his wife, who was astonished to discover his real age when in 1940 she registered his application for deferment of military service.

Goodall's birthplace was a modest terraced house in Monks Road, Lincoln, a street of red-brick homes and shops that had grown eastwards from the centre of the city in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Then, as now, 78 Monks Road had a small garden at the front and a paved yard at the back. A brass plate on the gate announced that it was the home of A. E. Goodall, music teacher. Albert Edward Goodall, Reginald's father, taught the piano, and was organist and choirmaster at St Peter-at-Arches, a galleried church of 1724 by William Smith that stood on the north-east corner of the High Street and Silver Street.¹ Music, however, was not Albert's main occupation. He was confidential clerk to E. E. Tweed, a leading Lincoln solicitor. Tweed was Clerk to both the city and county magistrates.

Albert's father, Thomas Goodall, was a leather-dresser by trade, though by the time he died his business activities had expanded in other directions. The Lincoln directory for 1894 describes him as a glue manufacturer, with premises at Bracebridge, then a separate parish to the south of Lincoln, but now part of the city itself. His entry for the following year reads, "Glue powder and size works and firewood merchant, asphalter and miller." Thomas and his family were strict Nonconformists. They attended St Catherine's Wesleyan Methodist Church, which urged temperance on its members, a reason perhaps why his son Albert, a convivial and gregarious man, switched his allegiance to the Church of England. One of the few women at St Catherine's who declined to join the temperance league was Reginald's Aunt Ada, who had no objection to the occasional

drink. It was her private joke to lace the trifles she made for church socials with sherry. They were much in demand.

Reginald's mother, Adelaide, was the daughter of a Leicester draper, James Jones. Albert Goodall was 37 and a widower when he married her in June 1900 and brought her to Lincoln to live in Monks Road. They were not rich – Albert's salary as a solicitor's clerk was £160 a year, though he had a small additional income from his musical activities – but they could afford a maid-of-all-work, who slept in a room on the top floor, next to the nursery. A second son, William, was born on 20 July 1902, exactly a year and a week after his brother. Both boys were given only one Christian name, soon shortened to Reggie and Billie. Their father did not care for long strings of names; he found it irritating having to write them out in full at the solicitor's office or in court.

Monks Road is down at heel now, but in the first decade of the century it was considered well-to-do. Next to the Goodalls' terrace was the Arboretum, a pleasant park on the side of a hill, with pavilions, a fountain and a brightly painted cast-iron bandstand, where bands from the barracks and the local engineering works played in the summer. Sometimes the concerts were followed by firework displays. Reggie and Billie were pushed round the Arboretum in their prams, and later played there with their hoops. When they were old enough, they went to Miss Wileman's private school in Nettleham Road.

The boys' parents were very different in temperament. Adelaide Goodall, the least musical member of the family, thought pubs were vulgar and disapproved of her husband's habit of staying out late with his drinking companions. His life revolved round three establishments, all within a short distance of each other: St Peter-at-Arches church, the solicitor's office in Silver Street where he worked, and the Spread Eagle Hotel in the High Street.² Adelaide was well aware that the Spread Eagle's waitresses held a special attraction for her husband, and was wracked with jealousy and unhappiness as a result. Curiously for a man of sybaritic tastes (though the fact that he had once been a keen sportsman may have accounted for it), Albert favoured a strict regimen for his sons. There were cold baths every morning. In 1988, almost eighty years after she joined the Goodalls as the family skivvy in 1910 at the age of 19, Mrs Nellie Stanney remembered:

When I got there, I saw these two little boys, Billie and Reggie. Billie was just as plump as his father, and Reggie was as thin as his mother. Reggie – poor little mite. I always felt sorry for him. They were all for Billie. I don't know why. Reggie always looked so cold and miserable. He always had to have cod liver oil, every morning. When I put the cod liver oil in the spoon he looked at me so miserably. He didn't like it a bit. He was sort of put on. He was ignored too much.³

Reggie was four when he was given his first piano lessons by his father, though Albert was convinced that it was the extrovert Billie who had the greater potential. While Billie continued to be taught the piano at home, the shy and retiring Reggie was sent to have lessons with his half-sister, Agnes, eighteen years his senior and the child of Albert's first marriage. At the time she was living behind the station in Tentercroft Street, where she taught music for a living. Not long afterwards she married Captain Eric Tetley of the Yorkshire brewing family and moved up the hill to live in Greestone Terrace, a cul-de-sac of late-Georgian houses situated just below the cathedral. Unlike Albert Goodall, Agnes had no doubts about her young half-brother's musical abilities. She lavished a good deal of love on him and built up his confidence. In 1910 she persuaded her father that Reggie should attend the Lincoln Cathedral choir school. Albert approached the organist and choirmaster, Dr G. J. Bennett, who agreed to hear the boy.

Bennett was comfortably off, for his wife, Marion, was the daughter of Joseph Ruston, founder of Ruston, Proctor, a Lincoln engineering firm with a world-wide reputation. They lived at North Place, a Queen Anne-style mansion they had built for themselves in Nettleham Road. Reggie was taken there by his father for an audition. Bennett sat at a piano fitted with a pedal-board that corresponded exactly to that of the cathedral's organ. Presumably he liked what he heard, for shortly afterwards Reggie became a fee-paying boarder at the old choir school at 1 Northgate, a terrace of little houses that still stands at the junction with Nettleham Road.

For an English cathedral organist of his time, Bennett had unusually wide sympathies in both religious and secular music, and Goodall always considered himself exceedingly fortunate to have come under his influence. Bennett, said Goodall, laid the foundations of his own musical interests. In his youth Bennett had spent a year at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, followed by two years in Munich, where his masters had included the celebrated organist and composer, Joseph Rheinberger. Back in London, he had been appointed a professor of harmony and composition at the Royal Academy of Music at the age of 25. His own works, strongly influenced by German Romanticism, included an overture, *Jugendtraum*, which August Manns conducted at the Crystal Palace concerts in 1887. Eight years later he went to Lincoln, where he remained until his death in 1930.

Bennett was a thick-set, fierce-looking man with a reddish face and a large ginger moustache. On Sunday mornings he wore a top hat, morning coat and spats, and carried a rolled umbrella, which he was once seen brandishing at a precentor who had been unwise enough to say he did not wish to hear a certain anthem by Gounod in the cathedral again.⁴ Goodall found Bennett an impressive, if somewhat frightening, figure. Another Lincoln chorister, Reg Woodward, has described some of Bennett's more alarming practices:

In the Song School he would haul a boy by the collar over the music benches at which we stood and administer a beating with a hard and heavy hand. On one occasion this was administered in error to the wrong boy. A shocked silence followed. [On learning of his mistake,] he roared with laughter and said, "Well, it will do for next time." Once he irrupted into the choir during a service and led out a malefactor by the ear.⁵

A dedicated cigarette-smoker (at home he enjoyed a hookah), Bennett was given to sticking his nicotine-stained fingers into the choristers' mouths to make sure they were kept wide open. The boys preferred it when he used the end of his baton for the job; it tasted better. Sometimes the whole choir was the subject of his wrath. The Lincoln historian Laurence Elvin remembered an Evensong at the end of which Bennett played the shortest of voluntaries, rushed to the vestry before the choir could leave the building, admonished the boys and men for their mistakes and took them through the anthem until it was sung to his satisfaction.⁶ But Bennett was not all gruffness and bad temper. He gave sumptuous Christmas parties for the choristers at his home. There were summer parties, too, when he joined in cricket matches on the lawn and whammed tennis balls over the roof of the house to boys waiting on the other side. Anyone who caught a ball got a sixpence. If there were those who disapproved of Bennett's methods as a choir-trainer, few disputed the excellence of the results he achieved: the choir was held to be one of the best of its kind.

Not surprisingly for a pupil of Rheinberger, Bennett had an outstanding technique as an organist. Goodall said it was Bennett's playing of Bach's organ prelude in B minor that first made him aware of the power of great music. Goodall was also introduced to Wagner's music through Bennett, who often played excerpts from the operas at his organ recitals, notably the prelude and Good Friday Music from *Parsifal*. (When "Father" Henry Willis, who had designed and built the cathedral organ, died in 1901, Bennett played in his memory, not some pious piece of Victoriana, but the funeral march from *Götterdämmerung*.) Bennett introduced new compositions by Reger and Karg-Elert, and performed a good deal of French music by Guilmant, Widor and Franck. English organ music rarely featured in his programmes.

The Lincoln choral foundation consisted of nine lay clerks – three altos, three tenors and three basses – and sixteen choristers. A lay clerk could live on his salary then, though some earned extra money by giving singing lessons. In Goodall's time, and for some years afterwards, the basses were Messrs Endersby, Lofthouse and Woodward, whose son Reg Woodward has described them lovingly:

Their idiosyncracies afforded us endless entertainment, their sheer professionalism a standard we envied ... Mr Endersby, a very distinguished looking man, had a vast voice, like the Lord thundering out of heaven. Mr Lofthouse was a Yorkshireman and very proud of it. "Eh, lad, 'ast tha never bin to Leeds? Tha doesn't

know tha's born." He had trouble with his aspirates and we listened eagerly for the verse in the psalm which he rendered as "Why 'op ye so, ye 'igh 'ills. This is God's 'ill." Occasionally he had an argument with his wife, which always ended, "Who's maister in this 'ouse then?" "You are, but I'm nek."⁷

Although a Lincoln chorister's round was arduous, Goodall thrived, for music was now central to his life: in addition to singing in the cathedral, he was having regular lessons in piano and theory from Bennett's assistant, Harry Trevitt. On weekdays the timetable at the choir school included PT before breakfast, morning and afternoon choir practice, and Matins and Evensong in the cathedral; ordinary school lessons had to be fitted into the few gaps that remained in the day. Games were played on Thursday afternoons, when Evensong was sung by the men alone. Services in winter could be a miserable experience, for St Hugh's Choir was unheated; the fantastical canopies of its stalls might be masterpieces of the medieval woodcarver's art, but they went unappreciated by small boys suffering from chilblains brought on by the extreme cold. The rewards were pitiful. The choristers had two 12-day breaks – one after Easter, the other after Christmas – and a fortnight's holiday in August, which even by the standards of the day was very little.

By the time Goodall joined the choir, Bennett had leavened the cathedral's typically English repertoire – canticles by Croft, Smart, Stanford and Harwood – with anthems by Mendelssohn, Bach, Mozart and Spohr. In addition he had reintroduced several works by his most distinguished predecessor at Lincoln, William Byrd, including the Short Service, known then as Byrd in D minor. At the time Byrd's music was rarely heard in Anglican cathedrals, though, simultaneously with Bennett's efforts at Lincoln, Sir Richard Terry was reviving the composer's music for the Roman liturgy at Westminster Cathedral.

In October 1912 there came a change in the services at Lincoln that was to have a dramatic effect on the music performed in the cathedral. The new High Church precentor, the Rev. John Wakeford,⁸ abolished the Litany, which had traditionally followed Matins on Sunday mornings, and replaced it with a Choral Eucharist. Bennett introduced settings of the Mass by Schubert and Silas, Dvořák, Gounod and Guilmant – all of them adapted to the words of the English prayer book. Bennett's own favourites included Schubert's Mass in G, Dvořák's in D (sung on both Easter and Christmas days in 1913), and Gounod's *Messe solennelle de Ste Cécile*, all of which were to become staples of Goodall's own repertory when he too became an organist and choirmaster some years later. Not everyone in Lincoln liked the unfamiliar works. Frank Woolley, Bennett's one-time assistant, detected a dangerous whiff of the Continent about them: "The music of these Masses was florid and chromatic, and of great length, and almost inclined to produce an atmosphere of the secular; that

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