

Review

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artistic standpoint, his historical judgment has been exercised with as much impartiality as is possible in the present still fermenting condition of diametrically opposed art principles. In giving a lucid and fairly complete *résumé* of this youngest branch of the most recently developed of all arts, Professor Ehrlich has not only taken an important first step towards a more elaborate history of the subject, but has succeeded at the same time in producing a very readable book for musician as well as amateur.

School Canons. Selected, Reset, and Arranged in order of Difficulty. By J. Powell Metcalfe, M.A. With accompaniments by Philip Armes, Mus. Doc., Oxon.
[William Clowes and Sons].

In the Preface to this collection of school pieces we are told that a practical difficulty in teaching little children in classes to read from printed music has been hitherto the want of simple compositions in which the notes are of sufficient size to enable them to keep the eye fixed on the symbol, while the sound represented by that symbol is in the ear. One style, and one only, the author says, is sufficiently short and concise to be contained in a broad sheet of five lines—the canon in unison: “the little musical epigram, that as long as music has been art, has been the special delight of the true musician, and which yet at the same time experience proves to be the best of all styles for the instruction of children in choral music.” In consonance with this idea, a number of little Canons are here given, to which a simple accompaniment has been written by Dr. Armes, and the teacher is directed to let each piece be sung through as a simple melody, and, when the children are enabled to sustain the air by themselves, to gradually introduce them to the harmony of the canon by commencing to sing when the class reaches the point figured 2, at first softly, and then becoming more pronounced as he finds the young vocalists can hold their own against his part. Two of these Canons are printed in gigantic notes upon a large sheet of paper, as a specimen of the manner in which Mr. Metcalfe desires that all these compositions should be set before the class. “The strictest care,” it is said, “must be taken that, whether the Canon be in learning or learnt, the singers keep their eyes upon the notes as they sing them. It is by thus training the eye to associate sound and symbol that reading is to be taught.” We heartily agree with all these observations; and, so far as we can judge, the spirit of them would be effectually carried out by the use of the music supplied, and in the method suggested.

Liberty. A Song of Ancient Rome. (Suggested by Macaulay’s “Virginia.”) The words written by Somerville Gibney. Composed by Eaton Faning.
[Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

THE title of this composition by no means describes its character; and we think it would be good, therefore, for those who may casually see it advertised to be told that it is a dramatic vocal work, with soprano solo and chorus. Opening with a symphony in F minor, the basses commence the voice part with an impassioned recitative in the same key, leading to a placid and melodious soprano solo in the relative major, accompanied in the course of its progress by a chorus for first and second sopranos and altos. After a spirited call to arms by the basses, they are united with the tenors in chorus, the bold theme in F major, to the words “No more shall the tyrants reign” colouring with excellent effect the defiant verses to which it is wedded. The full four-part chorus which follows—occasionally interrupted by interjectional phrases for portions only of the choir—is extremely good, and proves not only that the composer has fully thought out his subject, but that he is thoroughly capable of grappling with a theme which demands exceptional powers to achieve a successful result. We can judge but partially of the accompaniments to this work, for we find that it is scored for the orchestra, and can imagine that with such aid its dramatic effect would be materially enhanced. As it stands, however, in the copy before us, it is unquestionably a composition which reflects much credit upon Mr. Faning, who is evidently doing his utmost to sustain the reputation he has acquired by his “Song of the Vikings.”

The Initials. Fantasia-Sonata. By W. H. Holmes.
[Forsyth Brothers.]

THE title of this piece is suggested by the initials of Professor Macfarren’s Christian names, and the Sonata commences accordingly with the notes G, A, each occupying an entire bar. Although the “Initials” are thus impressed upon the ear, they only occur at the opening and in the closing bars of the composition—effectively, however, and with sufficient significance to justify its name and to prevent its being spoken of merely as the “Sonata in B flat minor.” There is much good writing in the first movement, the second subject of which, in the relative major, is extremely melodious, and passes gracefully into B flat major, in which key the movement ends. The “Allegretto” which follows, in F sharp major, has a charming principal theme and is treated throughout with appropriate simplicity. There can be little doubt that this will be the favourite movement of the piece, as, apart from the attractiveness of the subjects, the passages make no great demands upon the executive powers of the performer. The final movement, “Allegretto Scherzando,” is musically, we think, the best of the three, but this by no means proves that it will be the most popular. The light and playful theme with which it opens derives much of its effect from the chords against the natural accent in the left hand, a figure which is kept up throughout. The appearance of fragments of this subject in various keys, and its return, after a pause upon the dominant harmony, in the original key—B flat minor—are points which cannot but interest the attentive listener. The Sonata—which has been performed by the composer at a Concert of the Musical Artists’ Society—is appropriately dedicated to Madame Natalia Macfarren.

The Influence of the Organ in History. Inaugural Lecture of the Department of the Organ in the College of Music of Boston University. By Dudley Buck. [W. Reeves.]

THE author of this lecture is Professor of the Organ in the College at which the address was delivered; and, although we cannot say that it contains anything not already well known, the materials are exceedingly well put together. Apart from the clear manner in which the origin and gradual development of the instrument are shown, we have some very true observations upon its effect on the progress of music. “In spite of the disrepute,” the writer says, “into which the whole monastic system fell, there is no question but that the monks and friars were the great conservators and preservers of all the fine arts, and even mechanics, during the troubled times of the Middle Ages. As the prejudice against the employment of instrumental music in the Church services began to disappear, nothing was more natural than that the monks, having both the leisure and pecuniary means, and containing among their number the best-educated men of the day, should turn their attention to organ-building, animated by the same spirit which led them to decorate and ornament their churches and monasteries.” We may not, perhaps, agree with our author that the organ *dictated* counterpoint, but the regal sway of the “king of instruments” had doubtless a very powerful influence upon ears previously untuned to harmony. In conclusion, we must congratulate the Musical College of Boston upon having a professor who so ably upholds the high character of the instrument he teaches; and, although it may be a question whether his inaugural lecture was worth reprinting in this country, students of the organ will, we are certain, read it with much pleasure.

A Rhapsody (Come, Divine One). Cantilena. A Melody composed to the Etude in La Bémol of Frederic Chopin, by Charles Gounod. English words by Henry Knight.
[Music and Art Association.]

M. GOUNOD has already shown us how artistically he can construct a melody upon an instrumental movement in his charming “Ave Maria” upon Bach’s Prelude in C; and he has been equally successful in the Rhapsody before us, written on Chopin’s well-known Etude. We have little doubt that this composition will be eagerly sought by vocalists; the theme is extremely simple and expressive; and the accompaniment, we need scarcely say, gives much interest to the song. It was especially written for, and has been sung by, Mrs. Weldon.