

Review

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ANOTHER Festival in aid of the Choir Benevolent Fund is arranged to be held in Worcester on or about October 2, after that which (as we announced in our last) is to take place at Bath.

DR. SLOMAN's Cantata "Supplication and Praise" will be performed by the Norwood Choral Society during the ensuing autumn, the work being now in active rehearsal.

REVIEWS.

Frederic Chopin: His Life, Letters, and Works. By Moritz Karasowski. Translated by Emily Hill.
[William Reeves.]

IN the preface to this work the author tells us that just as he had finished transcribing the first series of Chopin's letters—written in the days of his youth—and was on the point of chronologically arranging the second (Paris correspondence), the insurrection of 1863 broke out in Poland; and this not being a favourable time for literary and artistic productions, the letters were given back to his family. How these interesting records of the brightest portion of the composer's life were wantonly destroyed is told in the following words: "When the brutal and insensate soldiery arrived at the second storey of the house inhabited by Chopin's sister, the mementoes of the great artist, which the whole family cherished with such pious care, were doomed to destruction. The piano—one of Buckholtz's—on which he had received his earliest instruction, and which had been the confidant and interpreter of his first musical ideas, was flung into the street by these Vandals. At night the soldiers made a stack of the ruined furniture in the square at the foot of the statue of Copernicus, and filling their kettles with wine, spirit, and sugar from the ransacked shops, they made merry round the fire, mixing punch and singing boisterous songs. Pictures, books, and papers—among the latter Chopin's correspondence with his family during eighteen years—were thrown in to feed the flames. The reflection which illumined the city announced to the terrified inhabitants that the reign of military terror had begun." All musicians must deeply deplore the loss of these letters; for as the author of this work, who well knew their contents, tells us, in these genial communications to his parents, "he poured forth all his affection for his family, his love for his country, his enthusiasm for his art, and his admiration for all that is beautiful and noble." But in spite of this calamity, the volume before us has a deep interest; for, apart from the letters happily preserved to us, ample material has been supplied by Chopin's sole surviving sister; and not only, therefore, have we a detailed record of the artist's career, but no reasonable doubt can exist as to the authenticity of the events narrated. That Chopin was a remarkable pianist as a mere child is a fact beyond dispute, for at nine years of age he excited the utmost wonder in the Warsaw drawing-rooms by his playing, and was invited, at that age, to perform at a concert for the benefit of the poor. Catalani, when passing through Warsaw, was so delighted with the artistic playing of the youthful virtuoso that she presented him with a gold watch, on the back of which was inscribed "Donné par Madame Catalani à Frédéric Chopin, âgé de dix ans"; and the harsh and violent Grand Prince Constantin, the terror of those around him, to whom Chopin dedicated a March of his own composition, is said to have "walked up and down while it was being played, smiling and beating time with the utmost complacency." Some of the artist's letters to his parents, from Berlin, are exceedingly graphic, and we regret that we have not space for a few extracts from them. Wherever he went his playing created quite a sensation; and it is related that whilst waiting for horses at the little town of Züllichau, he opened a pianoforte which he discovered at the post-house, and so attracted his fellow-travellers by his performance that when the horses were ready nobody would stir, the listeners overwhelmed him with praises, and one of the company (probably the town cantor) went close up to Chopin and said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Sir, I am an old and thoroughly trained musician; I, too, play the piano, and so know how to appreciate your masterly performance; if Mozart had

heard it he would have grasped your hand and cried, 'Bravo.' An insignificant old man like myself cannot dare to do so." Chopin travelled much; but his love for his native country never lessened; and the national colouring which distinguishes some of his best pieces gives to them an individuality which might have degenerated into mere mannerism with a lesser genius. In every sense of the word he was a true artist; and the author of the present volume, who was on terms of the greatest intimacy with him, also shows us how kindly and generous was his nature. Had he not become the pet of society, it is possible that he might have done greater things, but he could at least console himself with the conviction that both as an executive and a creative artist he was thoroughly appreciated. Idolised as he was in Paris, where he was said to have "turned the heads of all the ladies," his days passed as in a delicious dream; but it was in this city that the seeds of the disease which so rapidly enfeebled him were sown; and his dearest friends were powerless to prevent the catastrophe which they knew must soon occur. It is difficult to read any accurate account of the career of Chopin without a feeling of melancholy being created; but this latest tribute to his memory is certainly the best yet offered to the public.

Nænia (Poem by Schiller). For Chorus and Orchestra. Composed by Hermann Goetz (Op. 10). The English version by the Rev. J. Troutbeck, M.A.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

WHEN, some short while ago, this work was performed at a concert given by an amateur choral Society, we dwelt at such length upon its character and merits that very little remains now to be said. We could not, however, refuse a formal review to a thing of so much beauty and worth, while the fact is incontestable by anybody who has seen this music, that public attention cannot, in reason, be too persistently demanded for it. Of one thing we are sure, which is that no amateur who heard Goetz's Psalm, "By the Waters of Babylon," at the initial Concert of the London Musical Society, will fail to turn to the work now before us with eager expectation and high hope. The Cantata is worthy of the Psalm, as the Psalm is worthy of any genius vouchsafed to us in modern times. In both there are surprising power, masterful knowledge of technical means and effect, and that incommunicable and inexplicable something which constitutes the quality of greatness. Alas! that we so early lost this master of music, and did not know what a treasure we possessed till after he had been called to rest from his brief and ill-requited labours. But this, in our art, is the real "old, old story"—one that will probably go on till the end of time.

The Cantata sets out, after a lengthened and most attractive orchestral preamble, with the motto of the whole work, "And the Beautiful must perish," enunciated by the chorus in unaccompanied harmony, and followed by a contrapuntal movement, "What vanquishes men and immortals?" Here the conspicuous freedom with which Goetz wrote under such conditions is fully asserted, but the music is never open to the charge of being merely scholastic. Like a true master, Goetz ever kept in view the highest function of his art as an expression of feeling, and could subordinate all things to it. The chorus closes with a repetition of the "motto," and then a tenor solo, *quasi recitativo*, followed by another for alto, and yet another for bass, makes reference to a case from classic lore in which no power could redeem the dead from the grave. One is reminded here of the grace and beauty with which Mendelssohn illustrated the tragedies of Sophocles; and, indeed, the whole work proves Goetz to have been no stranger to the form and spirit that composer may be said to have invented in "Antigone." At the close of the recitatives we have a chorus in C sharp minor, "But forth she came from the sea," which is from first to last instinct with charm. It would be impossible for us to convey in mere words an idea of the pure loveliness here found. One thinks of Mendelssohn at his best when reading these pages, while all the time conscious of an element which only Goetz could have supplied. The chorus is long extended, but not too long. We can afford to linger over such beauty, and even then feel regret that "the Beautiful must perish." In due course, the

chorus leads directly to a kind of epilogue (also choral), wherein we find consolation for the evanescence of noble and lovely lives. "Yet a death-song upraised by the lips of affection is glorious" sings the poet, adding, "He that is mean and base passes unsung to the grave." Here Goetz draws together all his energies for a supreme effort, and the result is grand. What earnest, exalted and expressive music have we now! It is both strong and tender, like all great things in art. Take, for example, the passage "He that is mean and base," &c., wherein, by the way, we see another reflection of Mendelssohn's spirit. We know but little that is more powerfully true to poetic purport than this, but, indeed, a like observation is applicable to the whole Cantata, which should henceforth be a precious possession in the hands of English amateurs. If it be said that we have written a rhapsody instead of a review, our only answer is, that everybody who makes the acquaintance of this work will admit the inevitableness of a rhapsody, and grant the needlessness of a review.

Novello's Part-Song Book. (Second Series.)

1. *Spring's Approach* (Frühlings Anfang). 2. *Wild Rose* (Wildröschen). 3. *In the Woods* (Waldlied). 4. *The Rose and the Soul* (Rose und Seele). 5. *Adieu to the Woods* (Abschied vom Walde). 6. *King Winter* (Herr Winter). Translated from the German of F. A. Muth by Mrs. Cary-Elwes. Composed by Seymour J. Egerton.

The Triumph of Death. Poetry by Shakespeare. Composed by C. Holland.

It was a Lover and his Lass. Poetry by Shakespeare. Composed by Josiah Booth.

Love's Question and Reply. Poetry by C. Maçkay. Composed by John B. Grant.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE rapid spread of Choral Societies renders the demand for part-music so pressing, that were it not for works like that under notice, the supply must shortly become exhausted. The activity of the firm, however, which has done much to create this want, is not likely to be relaxed now that the result, long aimed at, has been so successfully achieved; and the collection of four-part songs and madrigals contained in Novello's "Part-Song Book" may be always relied on, not only as a library of the best standard part-music by modern composers, but as a vehicle for issuing entirely new works by accredited writers. The nine four-part songs for mixed voices now under review, are here published for the first time. Six, by the Honourable Seymour J. Egerton—with the original German words and an English translation by Mrs. Cary-Elwes—may be cited as most favourable examples of clear and refined writing; and we shall be much surprised if some of these, at least, do not attain the popularity they deserve. No. 1 is a quiet and musicianlike setting of the words, which cannot fail to be effective with a well-trained choir; and, although the same may be said of No. 2, we have in addition several beautiful points—as, for instance, where the phrase, "The white wings of angels shall fan her sweet face," is so tenderly answered by all the voices, from acute to grave, in succession. No. 3, in F minor and major, most sympathetically expresses some very beautiful verses, which—like all those in this set of songs—are so excellently translated as to convey no suspicion of their not being original. We particularly admire the fresh effect of the change into the major on the words "Ten thousand loves;" and the return to the minor throughout is thoroughly in accordance with the feeling of the poetry, a merit not always to be found in compositions of this character. No. 4, in the somewhat unusual key of F sharp major, is exceedingly simple in construction, a good effect being gained in the last four bars by the long holding notes in all the parts, on the words "Heavy moan and sigh." No. 5, although melodious and well written, is scarcely, perhaps, as attractive as the others; but No. 6, "King Winter," which has already appeared in the *Musical Times*, is full of that quaint and rugged character which the poetry demands. Commencing with a bold subject in A minor, the burst in the relative major on the phrase "Ha! who mocks me, tremble!" with the sudden change to A major, the voices entering in imitation, is extremely effective. The short "Andante," intervening before the return of the joyous subject in the major, and the lingering concluding bars may also be cited as well-considered and artistic points in a song which does

infinite credit to its composer. Miss Holland's part-song has already been performed with much success by Mr. Leslie's choir. The due expression of the words has evidently ruled the composer in the performance of her task more than the display of her own powers of elaborate part-writing; and the result is a placid composition which appropriately colours the touching and profound verses of Shakespeare. The harmonies are exceedingly good throughout, and the voice parts carefully and fluently written. Mr. Josiah Booth's quaint setting of Shakespeare's well-known poetry is thoroughly English in character, if we may be allowed to affirm that we have a national individuality. The melodiousness of the subjects, and the happy manner in which the voices respond in the oft-recurring phrases "Hey ding a ding a ding," and "with a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino," will, we are certain, ensure for the song a welcome wherever it is heard. So hearty and spontaneous a composition must appeal powerfully to the many choral bodies in quest of novelty. The last part-song on our list is, we believe, the composition of an American, and is a good example of quiet and unpretending writing. We scarcely know why it should have been printed in 3 time; and fear that, from this cause, it will be difficult to prevent a choir from dragging the second bar of minims; but if it can be kept up to the speed evidently intended by the composer, it cannot fail to prove effective. It is extremely tuneful, and the harmonies are most appropriate throughout. We shall be glad again to meet Mr. Grant in a composition of somewhat ampler dimension.

The Music of the Bible; with an account of the Development of Modern Musical Instruments from Ancient Types. By John Stainer, M.A., Mus. Doc., Magd. Coll., Oxon. [Novello, Ewer and Co., and Cassell, Petter and Galpin.]

ALTHOUGH the substance of the contents of this volume is contained in a series of papers contributed by Dr. Stainer to the *Bible Educator*, so many alterations have been made, the author tells us in his preface, and so much new matter has been added, that the work assumes an importance far beyond that usually attached to mere reprinted articles. The idea of tracing the development of musical instruments from the earliest times through the medium of the Bible is one which, so ably carried out as it is in this work, materially increases the interest of the subject; for, as Dr. Stainer truly says, "the study of the history of ancient nations, whether with reference to their arts, religion, conquests, or language, seems to gather and be concentrated round the Book of Books," and it is better to base our remarks upon so authentic a record than to trust to the mere opinions—very often immaturely considered—even of many of those who have presumed to study the matter. The various instruments mentioned in Holy Scripture are divided in this work, as a modern orchestra would be divided, into stringed instruments, wind instruments, and instruments of percussion; and the relation they have to kindred instruments of our own time is then enlarged upon. The first instrument spoken of in the Bible is the *kinnor*, which, although translated *harp* in our version, seems almost proved to have been a *lyre*, if we may judge from the aptitude of an instrument of this class for the purposes to which the *kinnor* was devoted. The continuation of the subject of stringed instruments includes many highly interesting accounts of the ancient *harps*, of the *dulcimer*—the name of which is stated to have been probably derived from the Italian—the development of this instrument, gradually into the modern pianoforte, and of the Greek *lyre* (*Kythros*); the closing chapter of this portion of the work containing a remark with which we perfectly agree, that "there are but few original progenitors, perhaps indeed only one, of the very large number of stringed instruments now in existence." The chapters on wind instruments contain some valuable information upon the *khalil* (which was probably an oboe), the various ancient flutes, horns, trumpets, and bagpipes, with a history of the growth of the organ. We have then two chapters devoted to instruments of percussion, so many of which are alluded to in the Old Testament; and the author gives us the origin of the application of the word *cembalo* to express the pianoforte part in a full score. The final chapter treats of vocal music, and in this we have