Six vocal duets. For medium voices, with pianoforte accompaniment. By Joseph L. Roeckel. [The Vincent Music Co.]

The voice of modern criticism may say of these duets that they are based upon the conventions of a generation ago. The accusation is true, but its weight depends upon the manner of using the conventionalities, which in the present instance is beyond all question artistically excellent. Mr. Roeckel has no marked gift of melody, and his accompaniments, although tending towards formula, are designed with care and well-rounded off. Neither the words (by Florence Hoare, J. Veld, James Strange, and Hugh Conway) nor the music make any considerable demands upon one's intellectual insight, and in many ways the duets are ideal for home consumption. Their names are 'June-tide,' 'Merry daffodils,' 'After a storm,' 'Blue Iris,' 'On a moonlit lake,' and 'A little comedy.'


The problem of writing simply and naturally without commonplace presented no difficulty to Adolf Jensen in the composition of his part-songs. Many of the musical ideas expressed in this group of pieces are essentially original, although they required no bizarre methods of expression. Choral societies in search of music that shall be intelligible to the most elementary judgment, and attractive to the most critical could not do better than turn their attention to such examples as 'Come out across the heather' and 'When the tendrils deck the vine.' These two stand but slightly higher than their fellows in the merit and variety of their rhythms and vocal writing. In no case is there any serious difficulty in execution, or on the other hand any monotony arising from simplicity.


Dr. Lloyd's two pieces display those characteristics which we always associate with his work, and the charm of material and absolute finish of his craftsmanship are here greatly in evidence. While the Elegy offers little real difficulty, great neatness will be found necessary. Particularly is this so in the Minuetto, which would form an excellent study in smooth thirds and sixths. Both pieces should be found in the répertoire of every organist to whom refinement appeals.

Mr. Hollins contributes, in his Theme and Variations, an important number to modern organ music, and we think he has been even more than usually successful. The Theme itself is charming, and the Variations generally well contrasted, and (a point we insist on as important) of sufficient diversity of texture to prevent the theme from standing out each time in a bald and monotonous manner. The first and third Variations are admirable examples of what this form of composition should be. The Fugue is bright and effective, and includes an excellent pedal-point and a brilliant peroration. The piece is assured of a wide acceptance.

Merkel's Variations (edited by John E. West) contain many points of interest, while they present some difficulty. This latter should not, however, debar the earnest student from becoming intimate with his material of which the work is full. The variation form has prevented Merkel from employing the dreamy sequences for which we think he so often showed an especial weakness. It should be added that the Variations are preceded by an introduction.

O that men would praise the Lord. Anthem for harvest or general Thanksgiving. Composed by Hugh Blair. [Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Dr. Blair has succeeded in providing, for choirs of moderate attainments, an anthem combining interest with simplicity of detail and general design. The choral and solo portions are vocal, and the organ part, while demanding some skill, cannot be called difficult. The music is well written, with just sufficient ornament, and we have no doubt it will be widely used.