Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 15, No. 342 (Aug. 1, 1871), p. 180

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3354662>

Accessed: 28-01-2016 08:30 UTC

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JOSEPH WILLIAMS.

Sunshine. Morceau de Salon pour Piano, par H. B. Ellis.

Why a piece having the English word "Sunshine" for its title should be called a "Morceau de Salon, par H. B. Ellis," it puzzles us to discover; but the music is truly British (at least, as our fashionable native composers have latterly represented the nation) if we except a reminiscence of Schumann's "Arabesque" in the theme after the double bar, on page 2. Mr. Ellis writes freely, however, and the passages are generally effective. There is no reason why "Sunshine" should not be admitted into our drawing-rooms as well as many other specimens of what may be called "weather music."

WILLIAM CZERNY.

Six characteristic Pieces for the Piano, for small hands. Composed by Oscar Beringer.

These six trifles, moulded on the plan set by Schumann in his "Kinderscenen" are well written, and will be found extremely useful for young players. Although carefully adapted for small hands, they are by no means easy, being obviously the composition of one who has trained himself in the German school, where close playing with the two hands, even in juvenile music, is the rule rather than the exception. This style is especially observable in No. 3, "Garlands of flowers," and also in many portions of the other pieces, some of which however are perhaps a little too restless for sketches of such slight pretension. No. 1, "Soldier's March," has a good bold subject, and a second melodious theme, in the subdominant; but we much prefer "Amy's little song," No. 2, which is exceedingly pleasing, and contains some effective modulations. We have already spoken of "Garlands of flowers," which, apart from its attractiveness as a piece, will form a good exercise for the fingers of both hands. No. 4, "The Young Uhlan," has scarcely a sufficiently pleasing subject to interest juvenile students; but No. 5, "In the swing," can hardly fail to become a favourite. The monotonous motion suggested by the title is happily carried out, and the theme in the relative minor is highly effective. No. 6, "A village holiday," with its pedal bass, is somewhat conventional, but it is full of character; children, however, will be puzzled to know exactly the meaning of the direction at the commencement, "Burlesque et f."

Three Musical Sketches for the Piano. Composed by Bennett Gilbert.

We have copied the title of Mr. Gilbert's pieces; but as No. 2, "Hunting Song," alone has reached us, we have only to express a hope that the other two are as good as the one before us. Of course, having reference to the hunting field, the conventional horn passages are to be found plentifully scattered throughout the composition; but the subject, in A major, is fresh and melodious, and although reminding us in parts of the well-known piano-forte *lied* of Mendelssohn in the same key, we can conscientiously recommend it on its own merits. Nos. 1 and 3—"Spring's greeting" and "A winter's tale"—are no doubt intended by the composer as contrasts to the one we have noticed, and we think should scarcely be separated from it in performance.

BREWER AND CO.

Gems from Handel's Italian Operas. Transcribed from the full scores for the pianoforte. No. 1, "Mi Lusinga il dolce affetto."*Handel's Songs,* arranged from the full scores for the organ. No. 1, "Lord, remember David," No. 2, "O Lord, whom we adore."

By J. H. Deane.

HANDEL'S Italian operas are indeed but little known in the present day; and yet whenever a song from these almost forgotten works happens to be disinterred it rarely fails to take its place with the lovers of really sterling music. The song from the opera of "Alcina," which has been ably and unassumingly transcribed by Mr. Deane,

has such a lovely flowing melody that we cannot but wonder how it is that such compositions are allowed to fall into oblivion. The two songs, which are arranged for the organ, are excellent specimens of the composer's sacred vocal pieces. The first, Mr. Deane tells us in a foot-note, is "arranged from Handel's own score of *Sosarmes*, from which the air known as 'Lord, remember David' was adapted by Dr. Arnold in 1786." The second, from the Oratorio "Athalia" (another work but rarely heard) needs no eulogy on our part as a composition, and we have therefore merely to record that Mr. Deane has performed his task with a reverence which does him infinite credit, and which we should like to see more general amongst the transcribers of classical works.

WEEKES AND CO.

A Wild March-day. Bass song. The poetry by Coombes Davies. Music by Alfred J. Sutton.

DESCRIPTIVE songs should be very good to be enduring. Mild melodies, with accompaniments to match, may pass in a crowd, and even create a certain amount of effect if well sung, but composers should well consider the matter before they attempt to excite a dramatic interest; for "sensation music," like "sensation dramas," must be either a great success or an ignoble failure. Mr. Sutton's "March-day," can scarcely be called "wild;" it is indeed too uniform to express the subject, the scales and chromatic passages being made to do duty whenever the gusty weather is mentioned with as much regularity as the machinery is brought into action in a theatrical storm. The best part of the song is after the double bar, where the quiet melody steals in, to the words "Spring is come, and flowers are glowing"; but even here the modulations give a restless effect to the voice-part hardly in accordance with the feeling of the poetry. There is much dramatic power shown in various portions of the song; but, as a whole, the composition is unsatisfactory because it is not spontaneous.

Three Songs. Words (by permission) from "The Christian Year." Music by Jane Mayo.

If these songs were not so overlaid with harmonies and accompaniments we should have much more to say in their favour. No. 1, "Nightingale's Song," is more free from this fault than the other two, but the composer evidently experiences a difficulty in allowing the voice to speak for itself. In the third and two succeeding bars on page 3, we at first could not clearly comprehend what was intended, but we perceive, by the next verse, that all the dotted quavers followed by semiquavers should be dotted semiquavers, followed by demisemiquavers, a mistake which ought to be remedied as soon as possible. No. 2, "Lessons sweet of Spring returning," has a pleasing melody, well accompanied in parts, but like the other songs, it wants quiescence. It is true that the words "Soft as Memnon's harp at morning," would make eighteen composers out of twenty break out into passages; but strength is shown in resisting temptation. No. 3, "To the Redbreast," is a well written song, but here again the voice is too much distressed, this time in the form of the twittering of birds. When will composers learn that it is the *feeling* of the poetry that should be musically illustrated, and not the mere *words*?

Original Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

Sir,—To obtain the degree of Mus. Bac. in Dublin, the candidate must pass an examination (1) in general Literature, as a test (I imagine) of his having received a tolerably liberal education, (2) in the Theory and Grammar of Music, and in Thorough Bass. He must also compose a piece of Vocal Music, of which a portion at least must be in five real parts, with accompaniment for stringed band or organ, and will be required to write "ex tempore" a piece of counterpoint on a proposed subject.