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The Beauty of Holiness. An Oratorio by William Statham

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excellent definition is given of the term "chest of viols," as well as articles on the family of "viols." "Cathedral Music" is made the subject of a special article, and is treated with great ability. It illustrates most pointedly one of the many good features of the Dictionary—the amount of valuable information afforded in a small space.

A comprehensive account is given of the "Carillons," with illustrations of the ancient ways of playing them; of "Bells," a history and an explanation of the technical terms for peals as well as a comparative table of the proportions of metal in English and foreign bells. The whole book is exceedingly carefully edited, and the slight alterations that have been made are but an addition to a work which was already good beyond comparison. To be interesting and trustworthy seems to have been the motto of the compilers, and it has been strictly adhered to, therefore the result is that it is not only of use and great value as a reliable work of reference, but of attractiveness and entertainment as well. Besides the fact that the book has been revised for this edition, it is gratifying to note that the price has been revised also by being reduced by one-half. It will now find its way into many places that it could not reach before.

The Beauty of Holiness. An Oratorio. The words selected and the music composed by William Statham, B.A., Mus. Doc., Dunelm. [Liverpool: James Smith.]

PROBABLY with the intention of finding something new in the form of work fitted to represent modern oratorio, each composer strives to make a design hitherto unattempted. That design may possibly be the point of a new departure, or it may remain an isolated effort. There is much that is new in the plan of Mr. Statham's libretto, which may be briefly described as illustrating by praise and worship "the beauty of holiness." The words are chiefly selected from the Scriptures, and there are verses of hymns by well-known writers added to augment the lessons conveyed in the extracts from the sacred writings. The oratorio is arranged in forty-two numbers, vocal and instrumental solos, duets, quartets, choruses, and recitatives following each other in unbroken continuity. Much might be written about the various numbers in their musical treatment could space be spared. It must suffice to say that the solos are melodious but somewhat formal in character, and the choruses are both clever and ingenious. All portions of the work are written with regularity and symmetry, and the composer seems anxious to place this fact well before notice, inasmuch as he has numbered the bars of all the movements except recitatives, and thereby shows that he has preserved a due balance of arrangement. If the music owes little to the inspiration of genius, it may be sincerely commended for its efforts of scholarship as displayed in the writing of the choruses, some of which are clever. The employment of a motto phrase or *Leitmotiv* expresses the composer's concord with certain modern views. His use of familiar and conventional passages in the recitatives, coupled with the repetition of words, unusual in this convenient musical means, shows that he has independent views on the subject of ancient resources of oratorio. The work would probably be found too long and of too much similarity of character to become popular without excisions, though if taken separately or in sections there is much that might be attractive.

Missa Solennis in B flat major. By John H. Mee.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE performance of this Mass at Oxford, was recently noticed in these columns. Apart from the interest of the music of the several numbers, an interest which grows with each succeeding page, there is much that is attractive in the ingenuity displayed by the composer. The opening Kyrie is in good honest eight-part writing, in which the ideas presented by the opening symphony are intensified by the voices, and duly elaborated, or rather emphasised, by the orchestral accompaniments. The form or model upon which the composer has chosen to construct his various movements shows a complete knowledge of, and perhaps admiration for, the writers of the latter part of the last century. This is well shown in the Gloria, alike in the treatment of the voices as in the accompaniments. The unity of character is well sustained throughout the opening

movement. The third number is headed "Qui tollis," but it begins as a quartet with the words "Domine Fili unigenite" in pure, simple, and expressive harmonies. The solo voices are relieved by a short effective *Tutti*, leading to the "Qui tollis," sung by soli voices, with an independent accompanying figure. The quartet and chorus to the words "Quoniam tu solus sanctus" is one of the most striking and effective of the portions of the Gloria. The responsive, or "conversational" passages as they have been described, which form one of the marked characteristics of music of the last century, when composers dedicated their best thoughts to the service of the Church, are here happily employed, fugal and free passages being cleverly intertwined. The opening of the Credo by a single soprano voice, and a like declaration relative to the three Persons of the Trinity, is a novel effect, and gives a zest to the massiveness of the declaration of belief by the whole choir which follows. Between the first and final announcement comes a beautiful solo for soprano, "Et incarnatus est," with an expressive chorus and a broadly written "Et resurrexit," in which canonic device enhances the effect of the music. The setting of the Sanctus is bold and striking, the "Benedictus" is a beautiful piece of work, most melodious and vocal; the "Agnus Dei" is no less creditable to the musicianship of the author, and the "Dona Nobis," the final number of the Mass, with its bright accompaniment and ingenious vocal writing, though extended to a little more than ordinary length, never loses any point of the interest it excites. Of the instrumental colouring nothing can be gleaned from the excellent pianoforte arrangement, but the figures point to high aims. The whole work is full of scholarly contrivances, but we have preferred to dwell upon its musical rather than upon its academical qualifications, and as these are somewhat above the average found in University exercises, those who are attracted by the labours of English musicians will doubtless be gratified with the result of Mr. Mee's efforts.

Twelve Lyrics. Words by Harold Boulton. Music by A. Goring Thomas. [J. B. Cramer and Co.]

THE duty of writing songs which shall exhibit the powers of the musician and the condition of art has for the most part been neglected by some of our native composers of late years. They may have feared to tread the paths on which so many of those who are proverbial for the action have rushed in large numbers and still occupy. They may have been content with ministering to ephemeral demands, and have lost sight of higher needs. The series of elegant songs by a composer whose name has always been associated with elevated aspirations should be gladly received. They are beautiful as melodies, and bear evidence of careful workmanship as well as of that quality which is described as inspiration. They are well adapted for vocalisation, and are capable of much expression. The music happily fits the words, and the accompaniments, allowing for a little bias on the part of the composer for the forms of treatment proposed by Gounod, are clever if not thoroughly original. There are two beautiful duets, "Contentment" and "Sunset," for soprano and tenor, the two kinds of voices for which the rest of the songs seem suitable. These songs are called "The Viking's Daughter," "The heart's fancies," "Time's Garden," "Voices of Spring," "Under thy window," "A river dream," "A love lullaby," "The Willow," "A Song of Sunshine," and "The countryman's love song," titles which to the intelligent suggest their own character. This character is so pleasantly set forth that the performer is impressed with the thought that the union of "voice and verse" is most fitting and natural, and therefore that the composer has followed his duty, guided by the light of genius.

Presto! from The Singing School to the May Musical Festival. [F. E. Tunison, Cincinnati.]

THIS is a highly interesting account of the rise and progress of music in Cincinnati. The advance made by small degrees to an eminent position, as shown in these pages, offers a warm encouragement to the establishment of societies who propose to set themselves tasks of a like character for the furtherance and encouragement of musical art.