
The lives of great pianists as a rule do not make very interesting reading. The account of the wonderful achievements of the pianist and composer Clara Schumann, even in the first volume of the late Mr. Berthold Tours. The editorship of the work is set forth, is also designed for the same division of voices. Give rest, O Christ. Edited by Walter Parratt. Let my prayer be set forth. Let Thy hand be strengthened. Behold, O God, our Defender. By George C. Martin. Sing to the Lord. By Christopher Tye. O hearken Thou. By Arthur Sullivan. Let my prayer come nigh. By Henry Purcell. (Novello & Co. Ltd., London.)

The manuscript of this Primer was found in a practically completed form among the papers left by the late Mr. Berthold Tours. The editorship of the work was entrusted to the able hands of Mr. Alfred Gibson, and the result is an instruction book for the viola which, when it becomes known, will probably rank as high in favour as the same author's popular Violin Primer. The plan and scope of the two books are, indeed, nearly identical. A clear and concise explanation of the correct method of holding the instrument and the bow, &c., is followed by plenty of simple exercises in the first position, with an accomplishment for a second viola, the whole combined with studies in various methods of bowing (legato, martelé, sautillé, staccato, &c.) and a few exercises in the higher positions. There is, moreover, an important addition to the book in the shape of four excellent photographs, specially taken. Two of them are life-like portraits of Mr. Gibson in the act of playing, first with the bow held ready to start at the nut, and secondly, at the point: whilst the others more clearly exhibit his method of holding the bow.

The primer is excellently adapted for teaching purposes, and also for a guide to violinists who may wish to gain a knowledge of viola-playing by themselves.

But it was an utter failure. I wished to play something of my own for the first concert, but I did not dare venture until I had the public on my side. Now-a-days such a statement sounds strange indeed! Apropos of Mendelssohn, we read of him in Paris in 1832. Clara first visited the French capital in that year, when she was only thirteen years of age. At a soiree (March 14) at which Mendelssohn's Octet was performed, she met that composer in company with Chopin and Hiller, and we read how in the artists' room she saw them, in merry schoolboy mood.

In many of her letters Clara shows how thoroughly she appreciated Schumann's music. But it vexed her to put it to the general public who did not understand it. She wanted, however, his genius to be properly recognised, and thought of a little artifice to win over the public. Hence a sentence from a letter of Clara's to her friend Becker. She is speaking of Schumann's music: 'One must know him, as I do, and one will find his whole self in his compositions. The time will yet come when the world will recognise him, but it will be long in coming.' Clara was indeed a true prophet!

We have had some difficulty in refraining from further quotation, for the letters offer so many tempting bits. The story of the life connecting together the letters is told by the author in clear, attractive style. Musicians will look forward with eagerness to the next volume. We may add that Herr Litzmann has had placed at his disposal diaries kept by Madame Clara Schumann during her whole life.

The first of the above additions to the series known as 'Novello's Short Anthems' is sung in the 'Pennykhiida,' or Dirge, of the Orthodox Church of Russia, the melody being known as Kieff. The music has much in common with that of plain chant, its rhythm being dictated by the accentuation of the words. The text, which it should be mentioned is suitable for the Protestant funeral service, has been ably translated by Mr. J. Birkbeck, and the music, in four vocal parts, for soprano, alto, tenor and bass, has been edited by Sir Walter Parratt. The anthem, which has been heard at various Royal memorial services, is intended to be sung in accordant parts, and well rendered, with due attention to the indicated gradations of light and shade, the music would be extremely impressive. Sir George Martin's short anthem, 'Let my prayer be set forth,' is also designed for the same division of voices without a superscription, but a piece which hung thoroughly well together (ein ganzes zusammenhängendes stück), not too long and not too short? I should like to have something to play at concerts for the public. For a genius this is certainly humbling, but policy sometimes requires it.' Schumann, of course, could not grant the well-meant, neatly-expressed request.

And now by way of close let us quote a serious sentence from a letter of Clara's to her friend Henry Purcell. It is one of the most interesting which they exchanged in length monotonous. Litzstein was perhaps the greatest of all, but his friendship for Wagner and his early recognition of that master's genius, and he counselled him during the years of exile—the facts of more importance and interest to musicians than all the dazzling stories of his triumphant tours throughout Europe. Clara Schumann's life forms a sympathetic surrounding. We must only venture to refer to one or two passages, so as not to spoil the enjoyment of those who will read this book. She is speaking of Schumann's music: 'One must know him, as I do, and one will find his whole self in his compositions. The time will yet come when the world will recognise him, but it will be long in coming.' Clara was indeed a true prophet!