Review

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The Conservatoire Collection of Choice Pianoforte Music. Edited by Henry Germer. [Breitkopf and Härtel.]

This collection of pianoforte music is stated to be "For instruction and recreation, selected, carefully revised and edited with correct fingering and expression marks," and examination of the pieces justifies this assertion. Amongst the twenty-two composers who contribute to the seventy-eight numbers some English names might certainly have been included with advantage to the artistic value of the series; but with this exception no fault can reasonably be found with the choice of the contributors. The pieces vary considerably in length and difficulty, some telling their tale in twenty-four bars and others extending to twenty-one pages, while the executive demands range from a "Doll's Dance," by Albert Foester, to Liszt's brilliant transcription of the "Spinning Song" from Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" and the reception music from the same composer's "Tannhäuser." The majority of the pieces, however, are of a light and easy nature, and many of them are very charming.

Six Rustic Songs. Words by Harold Boulton. Music by A. C. Mackenzie. (Op. 60.) [G. Ricordi and Co.]

THE text of these songs is unpretentious and the neatly written lines are descriptive of the characteristics of the chief months in the year as seen in the country, with briefly applied moral reflections; but they have a poetic ring, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie's music is delightfully sympathetic, grateful to sing, and easy but interesting to play. The third song, entitled "Solitude," is a little gem; and those named "In leafy June" and "The time for wooing" brim over with light-hearted gaiety. Vocalists should make early acquaintance with these songs, and we shall hope to hear some of them in our concert-rooms.

MUSIC IN BELFAST.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE MUSICAL TIMES for April gave a notice of a performance of "King Saul" in Dublin on March 15, where the composer himself was the conductor. The accomplished and genial Sir Hubert Parry came from Dublin to Belfast, where he conducted a performance by the Philharmonic Society of the same work on March 17. Miss Agnes Nicholl and Miss Muriel Foster came with the conductor, but the solo singers were not quite the same in Belfast as in Dublin, for Miss McKisack took the second contralto part (the *Evil Spirit*) and sang it quite admirably. Mr. Tom Thomas was the tenor and Mr. Charles Phillips the bass. The chorus of the Society, which can sing Berlioz's "Faust" as well as any chorus, found "King Saul" exceptionally difficult, but under the careful training of Dr. Koeller they knew their work thoroughly. The orchestra was of course reinforced largely from Dublin and England, although Miss Davis, our harpist—and a good one—is "local."

As "King Saul" was criticised and appreciated by competent hands when it first appeared, it may seem quite presumptuous to speak here of its merits or defects. The work was greatly admired by a full house, and the "conductor" (pardon this "portmanteau word," *à la* Alice in Wonderland, for a person combining the offices of composer and conductor) received the most gratifying applause when he laid down his baton. The performance as a whole was a good one. It might be invidious to discriminate among the solo singers, but Miss Muriel Foster's singing of the Ballad of the Death of Saul (Act iv., scene 2) was so exceptionally beautiful and tenderly sympathetic that we must specially mention it. This concert brought a very successful season of the Philharmonic Society to a close.

On the 8th ult. Mendelssohn's "Elijah" was performed as the last of "The People's Concerts" for the season. The prices of admission were only one shilling and sixpence, and the Ulster Hall was overflowing full. The solo parts were sung by Belfast amateurs, and all the performers in chorus and orchestra were local. It is therefore a thing to be proud of that the performance of what used to be thought a work of the first magnitude and difficulty should have been really an excellent one, making allowance of course for the difference between professional and amateur

singing. Dr. Koeller, the originator of these concerts, conducted with his well known ability and steadiness.

The greatest musical refreshment of the year to us "*habitantes in Sicco*" was a visit of the Hallé Orchestra on the 10th ult. Mr. F. H. Cowen conducted his seventy-seven splendid players, and it was indeed a treat to hear some of the finest compositions interpreted as only such a band can interpret them. The programme comprised the Overtures to "Rienzi," "The Midsummer Night's Dream," and "William Tell," Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Berlioz's "Hungarian" March, Tchaikowsky's Air and Variations from Suite in G, and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, No. 4, arranged for orchestra. The variety was almost overwhelming, but although there were no solos, either vocal or instrumental, the audience sat entranced to the end.

MUSIC IN BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company brought a week's visit to a close on March 25. Seven performances were given at the Theatre Royal, of which three were devoted to Wagner. The other operas were "Carmen," "Faust," and the "Bohemian Girl." The artists included Miss Lucile Hill, Miss Kirkby Lunnon, Mr. Philip Brozel, Mr. Reginald Brophy, Mr. Arthur Winckworth, and others. Mr. Hamish MacCunn was chief conductor.

On March 28 the last of Mr. Halford's concerts took place in the Town Hall. The function was a complimentary concert given to Mr. Halford by the members of his orchestra. The programme consisted of the Overture to "Tannhäuser," the Prelude and closing scene of Act i., from "Parsifal," and Beethoven's "Choral" Symphony. A special choir was organised for the occasion, and the vocal principals were Miss Rosina Hammacott, Miss Lilian Hovey, Mr. Edward Branscombe, and Mr. A. F. Ferguson. The whole went off exceedingly well, and Mr. Halford was the recipient of a well-deserved ovation. In presenting during a single season Beethoven's nine symphonies in consecutive order Mr. Halford has done good service in the cause of musical art.

On Good Friday, March 31, the Midland Musical Society gave its annual performance of Gounod's "Redemption" in the Town Hall. The place was packed to the doors. The vocal principals were Madame Lizzie Matthews, Miss Nellie Pritchard, Mr. Hamlyn Crimp, and Mr. William Bennett. Mr. C. W. Perkins was at the organ and Mr. H. M. Stevenson conducted.

On March 25 the Choral and Orchestral Association gave a very fair performance of Gade's cantata "The Crusaders," under the direction of Mr. J. H. Adams. On the 8th ult. Mr. Thomas Facer conducted a second performance, this time with orchestra, of his new cantata, "The Pilgrim Fathers." These concerts both formed part of the cheap Saturday evening entertainments given in the Town Hall.

During the week preceding Easter several performances of sacred music were given in various churches. On March 27, at St. Augustine's, Edgbaston, Mr. Gaul's "Holy City" was given, and on Good Friday the same composer's "Passion Service" was performed. Sir John Stainer's cantata "The Crucifixion" was given at the Church of St. Stephen, Selly Hill, on Good Friday, and the same evening the Passion music from Gounod's "Redemption" was performed at the Old Meeting Church.

A concert was given in the Masonic Hall on the 11th ult., the chief performers being the Ladies' Grecian Band of Harps and the Birmingham Madrigal Choir. This last made its first appearance, and, conducted by Mr. J. H. Adams, sang Pinsuti's "Spring Song," the madrigal "My Love is fair," and other pieces with good tone and fair finish. Mr. D. F. Davis contributed harp solos, and Mr. Montague Pollack, Miss Beatrice Vernon, Mr. John Walker, and Mr. and Mrs. Stockham took part in the programme.

On Wednesday, the 12th ult., Miss Margaret Johnson, a young local pianist, gave her first concert in the same room, with much success. She was assisted by Madame Gwen Cosslett, vocalist, and Mr. Johan C. Hock, violoncellist.