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Reviews.

The Letters of Robert Schumann. Selected and edited by Dr. Karl Storck. Translated by Hannah Bryant.

[John Murray.]

Nothing is more biographically valuable about a really great man than the letters he wrote, especially if they be interesting, and if the writer, as in the case of Robert Schumann, be gifted with literary grace. The letters which Dr. Storck has so admirably selected cover a period of a quarter of a century, the first having been penned when the writer was seventeen years of age, the last (to Brahms) when he was forty-four. These communications are as windows through which we can look into the life of this poetic-minded musician at the different stages of its development, and in looking we can appreciate its joys and sorrows, its aspirations and disappointments. Breathing the spirit of exquisite tenderness are the letters addressed to his beloved Clara, first as his true-hearted fiancée, and afterwards as his devoted and heroic wife. No less beautiful are the letters from Clara to her much loved Robert. Mendelssohn, Joachim, and Brahms are a distinguished trio who find a place in this fascinating correspondence. To Mendelssohn, Schumann wrote :

Clara told me with genuine pleasure how good and kind you had been. You know she is an old admirer of yours, and is happy at your least sign of approval. For her untiring zeal and energy in her art she really deserves everyone's love and encouragement ; then, as a woman, she is indeed a gift from heaven.

He then goes on to refer to Mendelssohn's Organ sonatas, and says :

Each Sonata is rounded off to a complete picture. Bach's music gives me the impression of himself seated at the organ, but yours brings me a vision of a Cecilia fingering the keys. How charming that that should be your wife's name, too ! . . . One thing is certain, dear Mendelssohn, no one but you writes harmonies so pure, harmonies ever-increasing in purity and spiritual beauty.

To Joachim he writes :

The cigars suit me admirably. They have a Brahmsian flavour, which is strong, as usual, but agreeable. I can see a smile steal over his face !

And to Brahms, not so very long before his (Schumann's) death, under date 'Endenich, November 27, 1854' :

How I long to see you, dear friend, and hear your lovely *Variations* [Op. 9] played either by you or by Clara, of whose beautiful rendering Joachim told me in his letter. There is an exquisite coherence about the whole work, a wealth of fantastic glamour peculiarly your own, and, moreover, evidence of what is to me a new development on your part. I mean the profound skill with which you introduce the theme at odd moments, mysteriously, passionately, and again let it disappear completely. Then the wonderful close to the 14th variation, with its ingenious imitation in the second above ; the 15th, in G flat, with its glorious second part ; and the last !

These extracts suffice to sample the contents of this readable and valuable book that should find its way into the hands and minds of true lovers of music, young and old alike ; it is a well-spring of delight from which all may draw to the advantage of their artistic well-being and pleasure. This well-got up volume is enriched with beautifully reproduced portraits of Robert and Clara Schumann, the latter at the age of twenty-three.

PART-SONGS FOR MEN'S VOICES.

My heart's dearest. Oh, proud and haughty maiden. The merry frogs. The handy man. Words by W. G. Rothery. Music by Wilhelm Speiser.

A spring shower. The Linden blossom. Words by W. G. Rothery, music by Willy von Moellendorff.

It is the miller's daughter. Words by Tennyson. Music by Frederick A. J. Hervey.

The midnight guard. Words by W. G. Rothery. Music by A. E. M. Grétry. [Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Mr. Speiser writes genially for the voice and avoids what are commonly called 'crabbed' passages. 'My heart's dearest' is a lively love lyric of folk-song character, one that pleases by its unaffected sincerity. 'Oh, proud and haughty maiden' is an amusing ditty, the text suggesting a modern version of the fable of the fox and the grapes. 'The merry frogs' is of a more broadly comic nature, and is a satire on incompetent teachers of voice-production. 'The handy man' will be found less easy to sing than the preceding part-songs, but it is a merry strain that will repay the extra careful rehearsal demanded for its effective interpretation.

In Mr. von Moellendorff's 'A spring shower' an attempt is made to suggest rainfall by the second tenors and first and second basses repeating rapidly, to a musical figure, the words 'pit patter,' until one is reminded of the piper who picked a peck of pepper. Above this accompaniment the first tenors sing the text to melodious phrases. The close, *Molto più lento*, in six parts, forms an effective contrast to the preceding vivacity. The part-song will require diligent practice to secure the necessary lightness and crispness of attack, but if it is well rendered it will delight its audience. 'The Linden blossom' might be called a song of consolation, for the text bids a saddened spirit 'to greet with rapture Sweet Mary's enchanting night.' The music is appropriately smooth and tender in character, and richly harmonised.

Canon Hervey has written unpretentious music to Lord Tennyson's familiar lines, but the strains admirably echo the sentiment of the words.

'The midnight guard' is a vocal march which, beginning *pianissimo*, works up to a *forte* climax followed by a *diminuendo* as the patrol passes into the distance—always an effective form.

Fifty years' experience of Pianoforte teaching and playing. By Oscar Beringer. [Bosworth & Co.]

There is a jubilant ring about these jubilee reminiscences which causes Mr. Oscar Beringer's pages to be anything but dull. From the time he gave his first pianoforte lesson for the fee of 1s. 3d. (the mother of the pupil had beaten him down to that sum from the eighteen-pence he, in the good opinion of himself, had ventured to ask) down to the present time, he chats most pleasantly of men and things that have come under his ken during his long and successful professional life. The book can be heartily recommended as one that will afford both amusement and profit as a pleasant fireside companion.

In view of a second edition, we venture to point out one or two slips of the pen. It was Alexander Billet, not Madame Arabella Goddard, who first played Beethoven's Pianoforte sonata in B flat (Op. 106), in England (p. 17) ; Joachim made his first appearance in England in 1844, not 1842 ; Mendelssohn died in 1847, not 1846 (both these slips are on p. 62) ; while in several places Davison is spelt Davidson, a common error. Portraits of Mr. Beringer and other musical notabilities add to the attractiveness of an acceptable brochure.

CHURCH MUSIC.

Te Deum and Benedictus, in E flat. By Charles Macpherson. *Te Deum, Jubilate, Magnificat and Nunc dimittis*, in E flat. By H. Elliot Button.

Te Deum, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis, Jubilate, and Sanctus, in D. By T. S. Dupuis. Edited by John E. West.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

A well-trained and numerous choir is necessary in order to do justice to Mr. Charles Macpherson's Morning Service. Given these conditions, however, and an artistic organist, the effects will justify the means employed. The *Te Deum* contains passages in unison for the sopranos, tenors and