

Review

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are good, bad, and indifferent works of this class, we admit ; but it is well that students should be accustomed to perform pieces the structure of which, as well as the passages they contain, should give material for reflection ; and those who have the power, therefore, should also have the will to disseminate such music as widely as possible. Mr. Hecht's name is sufficiently well known to serve as a guarantee for the artistic worth of any production from his pen ; and although the two pieces before us are comparative trifles, we can conscientiously recommend them to the notice of pianoforte students. The Prelude, based upon an extremely simple phrase, may be presumed, as its title implies, to create a desire for something of more importance ; and, whether the composer intended it or not, will serve as a fitting preparation for the Scherzino. This movement, though somewhat restless in tonality, under the hands of one who can grasp the passages with sufficient firmness will assuredly prove attractive. That some of the extended arpeggios in the left hand will demand careful practice seems acknowledged by the fact of the author's fingering most of them. The change into the tonic major, in which key the composition ends, is an effective point.

The Singers from the Sea. Cantata. Poetry by Hugh Conway. Music by A. H. Behrend.
[Robert Cocks and Co.]

" THEN stood before the Queen a quire of Singers from the Sea—and if their rhymes were uncouth, certes, their voices were sweet, and the Queen gave unto them the Prize." This, extracted from the description of the Court Revels, 1472, is placed at the commencement of Mr. Behrend's Cantata, and determines the character of the work. Opening with a melodious and well-written chorus, in which the singers introduce themselves to the Queen, we have a number of solos, a trio, and choral recitatives, all of which are written with studied simplicity, and consequently well adapted for amateur performance. Amongst these we may cite for special commendation No. 4, "The Syren rocked," for contralto, the effect of which is heightened by an elegant arpeggio accompaniment ; an unpretentious but tuneful ballad, No. 6, "Margery Rose," for soprano ; and the trio, No. 8, "This is the so g of the sea," in which the alternate syncopated and flowing accompaniment is happily sympathetic with the words. The poetry is refined and well adapted for musical setting. Whether the writing down to amateurs is beneficial to the spread of the art may be a matter seriously to be pondered ; but the bright side of the question is that probably "drawing-room Cantatas," even of the simplest kind, may gradually lead our lady amateurs to the study of something better.

The Rudiments of Music: An Introductory Text-Book. By James C. Culwick. [Dublin: E. Ponsonby ; London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co.]

ALTHOUGH books on the Rudiments of Music surround us on all sides, a good word must be said for this one, the plan of which has at least some novelty. The work is divided into two parts—the first, especially designed for pupils of tender years, merely stating facts in as simple language as possible ; and the second containing an explanation of several points which, as the author tells us in his preface, would be hardly suitable for young children or for those who open the subject for the first time. We are bound to say that, on the whole, this method is exceedingly well carried out. The formation of the major and minor scales, the origin and place of the clefs, the reason for the use of accidentals, and other important elementary matters, are very clearly shown ; but we cannot quite agree with the assertion that a certain number of measures of simple triple time make up compound time. The fact is that, having no single sign to represent a division of three, we dot a sign which represents two, and thus are enabled to write our bars in divisions of threes. Compound time, then, is nothing more than moving in dotted notes, the effect of the dot in this case not being to *lengthen*, but to divide the notes into three. The second part contains some well-considered observations upon the more elementary portion ; and even the compass of instruments, and form in composition, are touched upon.

The Moorland Witch. A Dramatic Cantata. Poetry by David Herbert, M.A. Music by Robert M'Hardy.
[Edinburgh: Hamilton and Müller.]

IN the opening chorus of this work the wedding bells are requested by the assembled guests to "care unwrinkle," and "ring off sadness." The following lines describe the pastoral scene around :—

Carols loud the lark and fealty,
Busy birds are chirping sweetly,
Meadows wave their wealth benignly,
Tranquil cattle browse supinely.

The hero, in tenderly addressing the heroine, speaks of the "burden of a love ignited," and also reminds her of an "ungentle shove" which she may have occasionally had to bear. Should the singers in the Cantata, therefore, betray the fault, which is said to be so common with amateurs, of not letting the audience hear the words, we scarcely think in this case it will prove detrimental to the effect of the composition. Mr. M'Hardy's music is, however, a proof that a composer who does not feel inspired by his libretto can at least successfully battle with its defects, for, although his setting of the text is unpretentious, it is melodious, vocal, and musicianlike in its treatment throughout. We may especially commend the soprano solo, "Loyal love"; "The Appeal" (an expressive basssolo), and a simple Andante, "The Allegory," concluding with a brief chorus. It is announced that the orchestral parts are published ; and, by the frequent indications of the instruments for which passages are written, we can imagine that the orchestration forms an important portion of the composition. The pianoforte arrangement, however, is good, and fairly under the hands of a moderately advanced performer.

Supplemental Tunes to Popular Hymns. Edited by Edward Husband. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

WHEN hymns have been well set, we are not much disposed to favour new settings. This, however, is merely a matter of opinion ; and were this theory general we should doubtless lose many valuable compositions. In the above collection, for instance, there are excellent specimens of this kind of music, namely, No. 6—to the words, "Over the beautiful Bethlehem hills"—a kind of carol, and No. 17, "Sleep on, beloved one"—for the burial of the dead—both being sweet and expressive melodies. No. 10 also deserves notice, as being well adapted for processional purposes, and as the work has reached the third edition, no doubt this tune is already popular. There are many others we should like to name, but space will not permit. At the end of the book is added a short service for those at sea, intended for use in churches during a storm, the usefulness of which is very apparent.

The Curfew Bell. Song. Words by Longfellow. Composed by Állis Gower. [Metzler and Co.]

THERE is much character in this song, but the melody is scarcely attractive enough to compensate for the monotony of the accompaniment. The dominant usually represents the "bell," both in vocal and instrumental pieces ; but here it is the key-note, so that we have the triad and 6-4 on the tonic somewhat too often. Amateurs, however, who happen to possess some dramatic feeling as well as voice may create an effect with this trifle, for Longfellow's words, even well spoken, become music ; and the composer's task, therefore, is half-accomplished by the poet.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE Wagner literature, voluminous as it already is, has of late been rapidly augmenting. In glancing over our weekly batches of foreign music journals we scarcely meet with a number which does not contain an article specially devoted to the reformer's career, or to one or the other of his music-dramas. Richard Pohl, in an able article headed "Das 'Parsifal'-Jahr" (*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, No. 13), points out the enormously increased interest manifested by the public generally in Wagner's music-dramas since the Bayreuth performances of the "Nibelungen" tetralogy, not omitting, of course, to quote the forthcoming dual performances of the master's operas in the English metropolis, and the successful propaganda made for his music by the