Review

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"Kindergarten" games have long ago been introduced into England; but, as stated in the Preface to the book before us, they have been hitherto wanting in the musical element which makes them so attractive in the country which originated them. Froebel's book on the subject, published in Germany, contains descriptions of these games, pictures showing them in full play, and a number of little songs to be sung by the children during the progress of each game. The verses of these songs are in the work under notice translated into English; but as the music in the original does not fit the new version, tunes have been composed by Lady Baker expressly for them, all of which are excellently suited for their intended purpose. The verses are models of purity of thought, and the words are just such as a child would use in prattling to its play-mates upon the subjects selected. Amongst the number we may instance "Grass mowing," "Baskets of flowers," and "The Dove Cot," for especial commendation.

J. B. CRAMER AND CO.

Showers of Sunshine, for the Pianoforte. By C. H. R. Marriott.

SINCE the publication of "La Pluie de Perles" we have had showers of many kinds, but amongst the number we do not remember one of Sunshine; and indeed, although in this varied climate we have fitful gleams of the sun's rays, and occasional bursts of intense heat from this luminary, we can scarcely call to mind being caught in a "Shower of Sunshine." All this, however, has nothing to do with the worth of the piece, which, although wonderfully resembling the composition already mentioned as having given rise to the "showery" school of writing, is evidently the work of an experienced hand, and may be recommended as good practice. The composer will, we doubt not, thank us for calling attention to the fact of the flat being entirely omitted in the return to the key of F, on the 5th page.

The Village Green. A Rustic Dance, for the Pianoforte. By Francesco Berger.

MR. BERGER has written a telling subject for the leading theme of this little sketch, and has introduced a series of brilliant passages so easy as to enable a player to produce much effect by a small amount of labour. There is sufficient variety in the piece to keep the attention alive; and, to show the intention of the composer he tells us, in a footnote, that it "must be performed with unflagging energy, and must be worked up *Prestissimo* toward the end."

The Wanderer's Return. Ballad. Words by Mrs. M. A. Baines.

Name me not. Song. Words by Robert Wyatt Wadman.

Sweet eyes. Ballad. Words by James Douglas Harrington.

Night and Morn. Canzonet.

Composed by Charlotte C. Gilbert.

BEING written by a vocalist (Mrs. Alfred Gilbert) this group of songs is likely at least to be a welcome addition to the store of graceful compositions which form the usual contents of an amateur's portfolio; but an examination of their merits has proved to us that their composer has succeeded in doing something more than merely throw off a few common-place effusions which will serve for distribution amongst her pupils. Without assigning them any very high rank in the world of art, we may say that they are all melodious and accompanied with the skill of a musician. "The Wanderer's Return" is extremely simple, but the melody is attractive, and the little that is attempted in the accompaniment is unexceptionable. "Name me not" is somewhat too monotonous in character to bear four verses, but the *legato* bass against the semi-quaver accompaniment flows well with the voice. "Sweet eyes" is a good specimen of the pure ballad style, the pianoforte part merely aiding the voice, without presuming to set up on its own account: so unpretending is it, indeed, that we care not for the somewhat laboured bit of symphony which occurs between the verses. "Night and Morn," to some verses by the composer, has much variety

in character, and is written in the more ambitious form of a "Canzonet." There are many commendable points in this composition, but we prefer Mrs. Gilbert in her ballads.

ASHDOWN AND PARRY.

A Selection of Compositions for the Organ. By Edouard Batiste. Edited by William Spark, Mus. D.

IN the school of organ playing of which Lefebure-Wely was the chief, if not the first exponent, Edouard Batiste undoubtedly holds the second place. In like manner as a composer for the organ does the organist of St. Eustache—although probably distancing all other competitors—take rank after the late organist of St. Sulpice. To those, therefore, who know and enjoy the organ music of Lefebure-Wely will the compositions of Edouard Batiste be welcome. The English equivalent for the combinations of stops originally intended for French organs have been carefully and judiciously supplied by Dr. Spark, of Leeds; there is, consequently, little or nothing wanting to render this edition of value to the English amateur.

Church Music. A collection of Hymn Tunes, Chants, &c. Composed by Stephen S. Stratton. Novello and Co.

Ten Original Tunes. Composed by Arthur Cottman. Novello and Co.

Six Hymn Tunes. Composed by Signor E. Pieraccini. A. Dimoline, Bristol.

Hymn for Holy Week. Composed by William W. Ringrose, Mus. Bac., Oxon. Novello and Co.

THE activity of hymn tune writers at the present time is, to say the least, remarkable. If the intrinsic value of these compositions in any appreciable degree corresponded with their number—which is legion—there might be some grounds for hope that England would take the first place in the production of this class of music. Unfortunately few of these tunes—which are brought out in a fugitive form and usually at the composer's own cost—ever seem by any chance to strike editors of Hymnals as being eligible for insertion in their collections. Consequently they are soon laid aside and forgotten. How far this is just to these musicians and their works we might now proceed to ascertain, using the above-mentioned list of works, selected at haphazard, as specimens.

Mr. Stratton contributes twenty-one tunes, in all of which we find evidence of considerable musical feeling. And, accepting them as a fair criterion of the composer's powers, we should say that had he received the solid and complete technical education which appears to be so easily obtained abroad and so difficult to get in England, he might in all probability have become a successful composer of larger works than hymn tunes. As it is, we find in the midst of much that is promising, certain weaknesses—indications of imperfect education—that would go far to injure the finest inspirations.

Mr. Cottman has narrowly missed complete success in his tunes. There is more musical talent and fewer indications of weakness observable in them than in those noticed above. Upon the whole they are most favourable specimens.

Signor Pieraccini's tunes are distinguished by all the melodious flow generally regarded as a characteristic of his countrymen. The harmonies, however, are both sweet and impure, and greater severity of harmonisation would much tend to modify the suspicion of secularity that hangs about them.

The one solitary tune by Mr. Ringrose is neither better nor worse than those just noticed—full of indications of nice feeling, yet just wanting in those qualities which constitute a thoroughly successful hymn tune. It may be said that in the number written and published by the recognised writers of this class of work there are very few which turn out standard tunes. This is no doubt true, and points to the fact that the difficulty of writing a good hymn tune is greater than is generally supposed. But, on the other hand, seeing so many tunes are written which in

themselves contain plain proofs of the natural ability of their writers, may we not deduce from this that there is considerable latent talent for musical composition in many of our countrymen, which only requires the assistance of a good technical education to bring forth good fruit.

ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE.

CHURCH SINGING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—I must apologise for intruding on your time and space, and beg that you will insert the following on Church Singing. I shall speak of it under its two classes—part singing and unison singing. First, as to part singing; your correspondent, in the Number for March, alludes to tune No. 106, "Hymns Ancient and Modern," as an instance of the bad effect of the *double air*. I quite admit that it has a bad effect if the choir be unsupported by the organ. It also produces consecutive fifths, but he seems to forget that the pedals playing two distinct octaves below the notes sung by the bass, so far covers the effect of the double air, as to render it rather good than otherwise. But where there are amateurs in a congregation who will insist in trying to sing a part, having neither a copy to sing from, nor an ear keen enough to follow their part strictly from the organ, such ought to be put down with a strong hand, for they only cause the thoughts of others to wander away to their foolish acts. The remedy for this is easy, if the clergyman and churchwardens of a church have a notice so placed, that all who enter the church may see it. And let it be to this effect: All those who cannot read music, or who have no copy from which to read, are desired strictly to adhere to the air. This would effectually remove one of the evils. But the other, viz., the double air, must be endured, as it cannot be cured. Now as to unison singing—it is not good I think to exclude unison singing, nor is it good to do away with part singing, but the two may be used according to the discretion of the organist and clergyman, but this should always be with the view to the comfort and convenience of the congregation. The same remedy may be applied here as in the other case, but it should be more strongly enforced, for where unison singing is established, the organist is free to play a part, varying, it may be, every verse. I mean these remarks to apply to chants and hymn tunes, and not to our elaborate anthems and settings of the Canticles. One word more,—I should like to understand whether those persons who so strongly object to consecutive octaves, do also entirely abstain from the use of the Double Diapason or the Double Reed Stop, if their organs possess these stops; for if they cannot endure the air being doubled, it is most unreasonable to think that they can endure the doubling of all the four parts. Neither would they be true to their theory if they held with unison singing.

I remain, yours respectfully,

THOMAS VINCENT,

Organist and Music Teacher, Asylum for
the Blind, Park Street, Bristol.

Blind Asylum, Bristol, March 18th, 1874.

THE WAGNER CONTROVERSY—POETIC BASIS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—To whatever the recent phase of the Wagner discussion may not have led, it has certainly been productive of one patent result. It has enabled musical people to listen to some really exuberant unfoldings of views and ideas, upon subjects hitherto esoteric, with gratitude not altogether unmixed with expectation. That some good must come from all this stirring of the waters, no one can doubt. Points long held in abeyance now crop to the surface. The musical community is being awakened. Those who have hitherto held in quiet security apparently invincible heights, find their position untenable. They can no longer say to the waves of

public opinion: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." The addition of a seventh string to the lyre aroused opposition. Similar obstructiveness attends every progressive effort. The very strife yields fruits of peace. This is expressed in your recent review of a "letter" from Wagner, as well as tacitly acknowledged by the spirit of Mr. Joseph Bennett's carefully worded contribution on the same subject, in the Number of your ably edited Journal for March. The leading article temperately approaches the very pith of the whole matter, and candidly sets forth the new views. Yet permit me to add I do not think he has made a single hit at the great musician. All that he says—and says so eloquently and so well—only rivets in my mind the continuously growing and deepening conviction that Wagner is right, and that his opponents do not understand him. It is not my province to re-introduce invective. But let me be allowed simply to state that in my view all your conclusions are foregone. It is to me as clear as sunlight that music must grow. To utter over again the oft repeated words of adverse parties would be irksome; still, I cannot help saying, in briefly stating the case as it occurs to my mind, where I deem Wagner's opponents in error.

All he says of Beethoven is truly said. The composers dismissed as having "nothing to tell," are justly dismissed. To the project of separating the "man" from his "theory," I say, "No." That music without poetry is but half an arch, "Yes." Our programme makers know this fact so well, that they will, if they cannot find a legend attached to an instrumental piece, invent one and tack it on. It may be the "Lion in love," to a concerto of Beethoven; or the "Shake of the evil spirit," to a violin solo. Some line of poetry, legend, story, they must and will have. Illustrations flow *ad infinitum*. Do composers work in a comatose state? "Yes." Beethoven knew what he did? "No." Beethoven left no record of his struggles? I say, "Yes, he did." Why not write more choral symphonies? "Straight jacket would have resulted." Instrumental music incomplete? "Certainly."

Other allusions I am compelled to pass by, though I could, with perhaps more pleasure to myself than to others, expatiate on each head of the question at considerable length. I should not now have written did I not believe the subject of paramount importance in the pursuit of art to every one, as well as to

Yours very truly,

GEORGE TOLHURST, Mus. Doc.

March 7th, 1874.

ON THE POETIC BASIS OF MUSIC AND THE THEORY OF HERR WAGNER GENERALLY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—Having read with much interest in your paper of the 1st of March, a dissertation headed "The Poetic Basis of Music," treated by one with whom my own opinions in a great measure correspond, and after carefully reading Herr Wagner's works in the original German, also those of some of his disciples and commentators, I should wish to go a little further into the subject, and endeavour—while refuting his principal doctrine—to do Wagner a little more justice and let him speak for himself. Before proceeding any further or speaking of any music, I think it stands to reason that we have a clear idea what we understand by *music* and by *musical excellence*.

Dismissing as frivolous, if not erroneous, the popular definition of music as "a concourse of sweet sounds," I think that of the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, is the most complete and exact—viz., "That music is the art of painting that which can be perceived by the ear."

Musical excellence is so manifold, that a definition is almost impossible. A quadrille may (in its way) be as good as an opera, just as an honest, though illiterate, person may be in his way as estimable as a Duke. Still the highest excellence is, and must be, that which combines the *most* excellences in component parts. I shall take up the