Review

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encored), Herr Stepan, and Mr. D. Ryan, all of which were much appreciated. Handel's "Where e'er you walk" ("Semele"), was well rendered by Madame Gilbert, Miss Katherine Poyntz sang two songs very effectively, and Mr. Stedman, a tenor with an agreeable voice, sang a ballad by Madame Gilbert, "From Maytime to December," and also gave, with much expression, Balfe's song, "We may be happy yet." Mr. Holmes played with refined taste Beethoven's Andante in F, and joined Mr. Alfred Gilbert in an admirable duet for two pianos, by Mr. Cipriani Potter. The evening was brought to a close by the overture to "Masaniello," arranged for two pianos (eight hands), and remarkably well played by the four gentlemen before mentioned.

By a circular, which has been forwarded to us, we perceive that Mr. Ridley Prentice is endeavouring to establish classical chamber concerts at the Eyre Arms Assembly Rooms, St. John's Wood, similar in character to those which he has successfully carried on for two seasons at Brixton. When we say that, should he meet with sufficient support, he will associate with himself in the performances such artists as Mr. Henry Blagrove, Mr. Henry Holmes, Herr Straus, Signor Piatti, &c., there can be no doubt of the general excellence of the concerts; and all who desire the progress of the highest classical music will join us in wishing Mr. Prentice every success in his enterprise.

THE prospectus of the "Oratorio Concerts" for the coming season is more than usually interesting. Two new works, one by Charles Gounod, and the other by Mr. Joseph Barnby, are promised. Mr. Benedict's Oratorio, "St. Peter," and Dr. Ferdinand Hiller's "Nala and Damayanti" (the latter of which will be heard for the first time in London) are also to be given; and Bach's "Passion" music and Beethoven's Mass in D, both of which created such an effect at these concerts last season, will be repeated. During the series of six subscription concerts other important works will also be performed. The vocalists engaged are Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Miss Edith Wynne, Madame Rudersdorff, Madame Patey, Miss Julia Elton. Mr. Sims Reeves, Mr. Cummings, Mr. Raynham, Mr. Santley, Herr Carl Stepan, Mr. J. Thurlay Beale, and Herr Stockhausen. It is needless to say that the chorus will consist of Mr. Joseph Barnby's choir, and that all the performances will be conducted by Mr. Barnby, with the exception of the works of M. Gounod and Dr. Hiller, which will be conducted by the composers. As usual, Mr. F. A. W. Docker will be organist, a post which he has so efficiently filled since the establishment of the choir. The first concert takes place at St. James's Hall, on the 15th inst., when Bach's "Passion" music will be given.

Reviews.

STRAHAN and Co.

The Window, or the Songs of the Wrens. Words written for music by Alfred Tennyson, Poet-laureate. The music by Arthur Sullivan.

As Mr. Tennyson tells us, in a prefatory note to this volume, that almost the only merit of his poetry is that it "can dance to Mr. Sullivan's instrument," we may reasonably presume that he systematically wrote down to what he considered the level of an art of which he has no knowledge, and with which, judging by his verses, he can have no sympathy. If Homer occasionally nods, our Poet-laureate can scarcely be expected to be less subject to human infirmity; and therefore a volume of bad poems with an apology for their inferiority, might be accepted from a man who has so nobly earned his fame; but when after admitting the worthlessness of his work, he plainly informs us that he thinks it good enough for music, we consider that composers have a right to protest against an insult which gains additional force from the high position of its author.

This cycle of songs is full of conceit; and although, as may be expected, we have here and there the true touch of the artist, these touches are few and far between, and whenever one appears, it is instantly quitted, as if the poet had condescended to write for a child, and was afraid of soaring above his comprehension. The story, if story it may be called, is simple enough. A lover, one windy morning, is on the hills, and anxiously looking at the window of his sweetheart. Approaching her cottage, he finds her gone; and if our readers can extract any meaning from the line "Down in the south is a flash and a groan, she is there! she is there!" they may discover where she has gone to. Then we find that the frost has come, and "fuel is dear." Spring returns, and the lover having proposed, by letter, to his mistress, after a weary time of waiting, receives a reply. He is accepted; and the lady being requested to name the day, the poem concludes with a song descriptive of the joy of the bridal morning. Our readers may naturally ask what the Wrens have to do with all this: we cannot say. The lady is called the "Queen of the Wrens," and the lover longs for the time when they shall "have a nest together," so that we presume this may be passed as one of the "conceits" which we have already mentioned. We do not know whether Mr. Sullivan in composing these lyrics has discovered more real poetry in them than we have; or whether, in earnest love of his art, he has resolved to shame his partner; but certainly he has thrown a heart into his task which has produced excellent results. All the songs are remarkable for artistic finish, and in many of them we discover a continuity of idea which is highly commendable on account of the positive eccentricity of the poetry. Were Mr. Sullivan more fully impressed with the necessity of songs being purely vocal, and more thoroughly convinced that the skill displayed in the instrumental portion can never compensate for the want of defined melody in the voice part, he might have the credit of founding a style of writing in this country which, with his consummate knowledge of the resources both of voices and instruments, time could but ripen into maturity.

The first song, in C minor, opens with what we feel to be a lover's sigh: then comes the moaning of the wind in the accompaniment, with a flowing melody for the voice. The change of character to the words "Follow, I follow the chase," and the unexpected modulation into D flat major are points which the musician cannot fail to dwell upon with pleasure. No. 2 is a tranquil song, with a graceful *arpeggio* accompaniment. The first phrase of the melody, passing from E flat major to G minor, is perfectly delicious, and the treatment of the words "Drop me a flower," is remarkable for fidelity of expression. No. 3 is open to the objection we have already mentioned. The pianoforte part appears to have been written first; and pathetically as the lover mourns the loss of his sweetheart, against the pedal bass, the song is not to our mind. The opening of No. 4, in A minor, is excellently adapted to the feeling of the poetry, "The frost is here," and the change into the tonic major is appropriate, but we do not like the rapid passage from A major to C major and back again, in the last two lines of the second verse: it causes a feeling of restlessness which is not in consonance with the words. No. 5 is a really beautiful song, perhaps a little overlaid with modulation, considering that it is all about birds, but nevertheless so artistic in melody and treatment as to be in the highest degree attractive both to vocalists and listeners. No. 6 is simple in the extreme, and more in the style of the modern ballad than any other number in the volume. It is, however, not the less welcome on that account; and its prevailing tenderness, never degenerating, like too many love-songs, into maudlin sentiment, is certain to ensure its ready acceptance with a cultivated audience. No. 7 begins with an *agitato* movement in E minor, which is accompanied by the voice according to the pattern we have already alluded to. There is much dramatic feeling shown throughout this song, and the alternation between major and minor is always in true

keeping with the words; but the pianoforte rules the composition, and the lover has but few chances of expressing the painful suspense with which through the dreary "mist and the rain," he awaits the answer to his letter. We think that here Mr. Sullivan has lost an opportunity; for certainly the author has given him more real poetry to work upon in this song than in any other in the volume. The theme of No. 8 falls upon the ear as familiar; but, both in melody and accompaniment, the song is a model of grace and elegance. The phrase, in G sharp minor,—harmonised with a key-note pedal—to the line, "Take my love, and be my wife," is evidently a favourite with the composer, and deservedly so, for it reflects the trustful feeling of the words with a truth of expression highly to be commended. No. 9 is a little gem in its way. The song is descriptive of the hesitation in opening the letter which decides the lover's fate. "Two little hands that meet" are "claspt on her seal," and these words are most sympathetically set by the composer, who has never failed to embody, with a faithfulness indicative of the inborn artist, the faintest poetical thought he can find. A simple *andantino*, in E minor, carefully accompanied, and ushered in with two bars of symphony, appropriately expressive of irresolution and suspense, will sufficiently describe to our readers the mode in which this lyric is treated. A delicate *arpeggio* accompaniment prevails throughout No. 10; and here the vocal melody is more flowing than in most of the songs in which the instrumental part assumes so much prominence. Where the *arpeggio* is broken, in order to give additional importance to the words "Blaze upon her window, sun," an excellent effect is gained by the impassioned ascent to the high A, in the voice part, which we are sorry to see written in small notes, with an altered passage for voices of limited compass. No. 11, the last song of the series, is cleverly conceived throughout, and looks more complicated than it sounds, many of the keys to which it modulates requiring an enharmonic change to connect them more closely to the eye. The *agitato* accompaniment, in the return to the original phrase, is an excellent point; and the conclusion is animated and effective in the extreme. We can scarcely doubt that this work will command a ready sale, and sincerely hope that our remarks, which are put forth in the utmost good faith, may stimulate many of our readers to become intimately acquainted with a volume to which two such eminent names are attached. No praise can be too great for the manner in which Mr. Sullivan has vindicated the dignity of his art, under what we cannot but conceive the most disadvantageous circumstances; and there can be no question that if Mr. Tennyson's verses continue to "dance to Mr. Sullivan's instrument," it will only be because they have been dragged into enduring popularity by the worth of the music.

RUDALL, ROSE, CARTE AND CO.

The Musical Directory, Annual and Almanack for 1871

AT length we are enabled conscientiously to recommend this work as a reliable book of reference: all the dates have been carefully corrected, and everywhere we see the result of that careful supervision which we have a right to expect in a volume the chief merit of which should be its unerring accuracy. The "Remarks on the past year" give a faithful record of the principal musical events; but as in one part of the article it is expressly said that opinions are purposely not advanced, we think it a pity the writer should affirm that Herr Wachtel, the vocalist, has "never been properly estimated here." On the contrary, we believe, it is because he *has* been properly estimated, that his sudden secession from his position at the Royal Italian Opera during the last season caused so little regret that the public did not even care to read his letter explaining the cause of his absence. Mr. John Towers, who has on a former occasion contributed the result of his musical researches to this work, gives us in the present number an interesting paper on Beethoven, and follows it with a list of all his known works, chronologically

arranged. We have the usual catalogue of the principal compositions published during the year; and in proof of the desire to make the book as perfect as possible, a list of corrections received after going to press is given.

The Professor's Pocket Book and Daily and Hourly Engagement Diary for 1871. Published under the immediate direction of Mr. Jules Benedict.

THIS is an excellent idea well carried out, and Mr. Benedict's brother professors will thank him for so admirably anticipating their wants. The engagements not only for every day in the year, but for every hour in the day, can be here noted down; and there is also a separate part for recording receipts and payments, the importance of which cannot be too highly estimated by all methodical professional men. The book commences with an almanack, in which all the principal events (chiefly musical) are given, as well as the information on other matters usually found in pocket-books. The work is well got up; and we have no doubt that it will command, as it really deserves, an extensive sale.

SAMPSON LOW, SON AND MARSTON.

The Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer, with the accompanying Tunes.

THE difficulty of properly editing a collection of hymn tunes must be very great, if we may judge from the almost innumerable failures which have resulted from the attempts made during the last twenty or thirty years. Musicians and amateurs alike have tried their hand at this most difficult of all tasks, and both more or less have failed. Sound church musicians have brought out books in which the harmonies were so painfully correct as to be a source of wonder to many, but pleasure to few. Other musicians of the same class have given us progression so painfully incorrect as to produce the same result with a difference. Whilst some amateurs, whose predilections have been understood to be gregorian, have set the feet of congregations itching by the seductive strains of a German waltz, or given them food for reflection as to where the point of sympathy can be between a French operatic air and a hymn on Heaven. It was not an unnatural inference to draw that, seeing single handed editors had almost invariably failed in producing a satisfactory result, it was just probable that a "committee of friends" might succeed. Of course a matter of this kind depends greatly upon the kind of "friends" you place upon the committee, and as in the present case only one of those friends is named (of whose musical qualifications we know nothing), the evidence of the book itself must be taken as to whether the committee were individually or collectively competent to carry through so important a work. And perhaps a few words may not be out of place here on the general subject of editing Hymn Tune Books. There appears to be a general notion prevalent that any one possessing the slightest amount of musical knowledge providing he—or she—have the money to spare and the time to waste may collect together a number of the songs of the church, publish them, and become at once an authority. And this evil is greatly aggravated when a number of persons join together for the same object. It may be urged that the aggregate knowledge of twenty amateurs might equal that of an ordinary musician. That is possible. But where would the twenty-fold aggregation of their ignorance lead them? There can be no doubt that a work so important, so difficult, and when properly performed, so great in its results, demands powers such as are possessed by few, and should not be entered upon without a due appreciation of the magnitude of the task. These reflections are suggested by an examination of this collection of tunes. Internal evidence points irresistibly to the fact that it is the work of amateurs. Considered in relation to its selection of old tunes or the addition of new, it is altogether wanting in thoroughness. In selecting tunes by competent and well known composers it is difficult to make a mistake, but to take