Review

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the notice of private drawing-room choirs, as well as to those Choral Societies which appeal to public criticism upon their efforts; for there is always a difficulty in obtaining vocal works which, whilst sufficiently pleasing for a general audience, are not too trivial to be placed before the educated musician. The pianoforte part in this edition is excellently arranged, with full indications of the salient points of the score; and it may be added that, although conveying a good idea of the orchestration, the accompaniments are thoroughly within the reach of any moderate pianist.

Improvisation, Barcarole, Serenade, pour le Piano. Par Oliver A. King. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

SOME of this young composer's works have already been favourably noticed in "THE MUSICAL TIMES"; and here are three novelties from his pen which will assuredly add to his reputation. No. 1 has all the air of an Improvisation, but, although brief, it has a definite subject, which is treated with the skill of an artist. The portion written in three lines need not frighten amateurs, for the manner in which it is to be played is clearly expressed. The Barcarole has a well-marked and melodious theme, the effect being materially enhanced by a figure in the accompaniment, which is continued throughout the piece. We see no reason for the enharmonic change in the seventh bar, especially as the legitimate notation is adhered to in the following bar. No doubt the composer thought it would be easier to read; but the confusion between G $\sharp$ and F $\sharp$ makes it, as it appears to us, more difficult. The Serenade is a graceful piece, looking indeed more complicated than it really is. The subject is expressive; and, well sung with the fingers, would be extremely effective. To make it stand forth from the semiquaver accompaniment will, however, require some practice, even with the directions which are very judiciously given. All these pieces demand exceptionally good playing; but it is to the credit of Mr. King that he seeks the praise rather of the few than of the many, and insists, therefore, upon lifting the performer to the level of his music, instead of lowering his music to the level of the performer.

A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea. Chorus with Instrumental Accompaniment. Words by Allan Cunningham. Music by Francis Edward Gladstone, Mus. Doc. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS Chorus was composed for, and performed by, the Highbury Philharmonic Society, its reception at the Society's Concert on the 5th ult. anticipating that favourable verdict which we have now to pronounce upon the piece, after a more careful consideration of its merits than can be given to it in the concert-room. We may at once say that the musical colouring of words demanding a very large amount of dramatic feeling for their due realisation is so truly sympathetic throughout, that we may confidently look to the composer for a work which will afford him more ample scope for the development of the talent which he undoubtedly possesses. We are especially pleased with the portion in the tonic minor, descriptive of the rising of the tempest, the bold subject in the bass, answered by the tenor in the dominant, being extremely effective; and although this fugal treatment of the theme is but brief, the whole of the writing of the voice parts is powerful and musicianlike, the return to the major being an admirable point. For its due effect no doubt this Chorus demands the accompaniment of the full orchestra; but it has a well-considered pianoforte part, which it need scarcely be said is an integral portion of the composition.

A Slumber Song, for the Pianoforte.

An Old Story. Song. Words by H. E. von Rüdiger. Composed by J. T. Field.

[Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

"SLUMBER SONGS" are somewhat overdone, even Mr. Field must admit; but he nevertheless adds one more to the store, with the conventional monotonous bass, and a melody sufficiently harmless to soothe without irritating. The piece has but small pretensions, yet it is not without a certain grace which we should be glad to recognise in a composition of more importance. We much prefer the song, which tells a story in appropriate music. Of course we have the usual love tale, ending with the shadow of the

"silent grave"; but composers will choose these subjects, and vocalists will sing them, so we can scarcely blame publishers for printing them.

Heartsease. Melody, for the Pianoforte. By Ellen Norton. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE composer of this little sketch is unknown to us, but she writes elegantly and fluently; and when she has more to say may probably arrest our attention as decisively as she could wish. Meanwhile we may congratulate her upon having acquired the art, of all others the most difficult to a young writer, of keeping within her powers.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE first performance at the Paris National Opéra of Verdi's "Aida," which took place on March 22, under the personal direction of the *maestro*, resulted in a complete triumph both for the composer and the zealous director, M. Vaucorbeil. This having been the first addition to the *répertoire* of the national institution under the new *régime*, French journals have dwelt somewhat grudgingly upon the fact of the productions of native genius having been passed by on this occasion. No such feeling, however, manifested itself among the audience, who were most demonstrative in their enthusiastic appreciation. The entire *mise-en-scène* of the opera is admitted on all sides to be magnificent, every detail in the matter of Egyptian costumes, scenery, and other stage requisites having been studied and carried out with the minutest care and attention. Similar devotion to the work was shown by the executive artists, although, from a musical point of view, the present performance is said to have been inferior to that of 1876, when "Aida" was first brought out in the French capital at the Théâtre Ventadour. The principal vocalists at the National Opéra were Mesdames Krauss and Bloch, MM. Sellier and Maurel. During the evening the composer was made the object of a series of ovations; he was presented with a golden lyre, and wreaths and flowers were lavished upon him. Before quitting Paris, the President of the Republic, on the occasion of a brilliantly attended *déjeuner* given to the *maestro*, invested him with the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, a distinction not hitherto conferred upon any living French composer.

There appears after all to be but little chance of M. Gounod's already much-talked-of new opera "Le Tribut de Zamora" making its *début* at the Grand-Opéra. A sketch of the work, which has undergone several alterations, was recently given by the composer at the pianoforte at the Opéra, when it is said to have disappointed the expectations naturally raised by every new production emanating from the pen of the most popular composer of modern France. M. Ambroise Thomas's new lyrical drama "Francesca da Rimini" is, on the other hand, in course of preparation at the National Théâtre, where it will shortly be brought out. The libretto, of which M. Jules Barbier is the author, is founded on a well-known episode in Dante's "Divina Commedia," and is said to include, by way of tableaux, impersonations of Virgil, and of Dante and his Beatrice.

Madame Pauline Lucca, after an absence of many years from the Imperial Opera of Berlin, where she had been the declared favourite, made her reappearance at that establishment on the 7th ult., in the title-rôle of Bizet's "Carmen," and again completely turned the heads of the otherwise cool and criticising inhabitants of the Northern capital. Such being the case, it may be inferred, without quoting the confirmatory reports of the local journals, that the *diva* has lost none of the peculiar charms, both vocal and histrionic, the display of which she has chosen for some considerable length of time to confine almost exclusively to the limits of the Austrian *Eldorado*. Of course, the adherents of Wagner, who form an increasing sect amongst the Berlin inhabitants, point with natural disdain to the prevailing "Lucca-fever." The Emperor William, on the other hand, who has lately said such pretty things about the "Nibelungen-Tetralogy"—a species of art-work, the general cultivation of which will of necessity prove fatal to the existing "star" worship—has, with an impartial hand, as becomes an Emperor, bestowed upon the lady a costly bracelet in recognition of her high artistic merits.