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Twelve Songs for a Soprano Voice, from the Oratorios Composed by G. F. Handel by Alberto Randegger; G. F. Handel

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spirit of impartiality which should distinguish the work of a historian. The view of M. Gounod taken by the writer is that of an enthusiastic partisan and ardent admirer. This admiration is occasionally expressed in terms of high encomium, and has led to the adoption of a standpoint on which there is apparently room only for one, and from which all that the eye lights upon appears rose-coloured and glowing. The book unquestionably shows a great appreciation of the talents of M. Gounod, and there are several interesting anecdotes concerning him, but the majority of ordinary readers would have been better able to understand the feeling of adoration had it been set forth in a manner that was more comprehensible to meaner capacities than it is. Little or nothing is said about Gounod's residence in London, but opportunity is taken to sneer at English musical taste. The value and clearness of the work for biographical purposes is lessened by the glamour of admiration which surrounds even the plainest statement of facts. This may please some minds, but those minds will probably not belong to Englishmen. Gounod is held in high estimation in this country for his genius, and British readers still wait for a trustworthy common sense view of his artistic career, and not a rhapsody, written with an excess of feeling that, only in the mind of the authoress, carries all before it. The literary style of the book is not of the highest order, the writer having been evidently too much engrossed with the subject to descend to the trivialities of an accurate and clear method of expression.

George Alexander Macfarren: his Life, Work, and Influence. By Henry C. Banister. [George Bell and Sons.]

MR. BANISTER has won approval from all the pupils and admirers of the late Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, by the production of his exhaustive and copious biography. He tells the story of Macfarren's early life, his struggles in manhood, and the ultimate rewards and honours gained, in a plain straightforward way. There is a large amount of enthusiasm in the expressions employed in relating the record of the life, work, and influence; but there is no attempt at fine writing, for the author doubtless felt that this would be altogether superfluous, and perhaps also that it was out of his line. He has given great importance to newspaper extracts and so forth, and he tells many anecdotes concerning the wonderful powers of memory and knowledge of musical things possessed by Macfarren, powers developed by his unfortunate affliction, loss of sight. His lectures, speeches, and other work, as his friends were wont to say, were not only mental, but they were monumental as well as ornamental. In these lectures and criticisms, which constituted a great part of his work, will also be found the germ of the influence he is likely to exercise over his own generation. His prejudices are gracefully alluded to and lightly touched upon. His merits as a composer posterity will doubtless judge if they desire so to do. At all events, the information likely to be useful, not only in this matter, but also in most that concerns Macfarren, will be found in the pages of Mr. Banister's book, for he has done his work conscientiously if not brilliantly.

Twelve Songs for a Soprano Voice, from the Oratorios composed by G. F. Handel. Edited, with marks for phrasing, expression, and breathing, by Alberto Randegger.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

IN our recent notice of Mr. Randegger's edition of the solo music in Mendelssohn's "Elijah," we alluded to the probability of this work being speedily followed by others of a similar character; and now, under the appropriate title of "Novello's Concert Edition," we have an excellent selection of Handel's songs for a soprano voice, from his Oratorios, the directions of the experienced editor of which must prove a valuable lesson to all young vocalists, many of whom, even with good voices, are often doubtful regarding the important subjects of phrasing, expression, and the proper management of breathing. Considering that the contents of this volume contain all the most popular soprano solos in Handel's standard Oratorios, it is unnecessary to mention any by name; but we may say that many exquisite Recitatives, which are often passed over by amateurs who diligently study the songs which follow them, will no doubt receive earnest attention from the

possessors of this edition, in consequence of the light thrown upon the due rendering of the words by Mr. Randegger.

The Story of Bethany. A Sacred Cantata. Words by the Rev. W. Robinson. Music by Henry Coward.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

IT is highly satisfactory to find the growing demand for church cantatas, or short, simple musical works suitable for performance during Service, met in so earnest a manner as is instanced in Mr. Coward's "Story of Bethany." The solos are well written, expressive and melodious; the concerted pieces for soli or chorus are so designed as to interest the singers without overtaxing them with difficulties. When the devices of fugue or imitation are employed—evidences, perhaps, of the "exercise" character of the work—there is no pressing forward scientific knowledge for the sake of display, but all seems to arise naturally out of the treatment. The plan upon which the Cantata is based may be gathered from the titles of the three parts of the work. The first is called "The Home," the second "The Tomb," and the third "The Mount." The subject is admirably dealt with, and as it treats of one of the most interesting episodes in the life of Our Lord, it is not unlikely that the Cantata will become widely popular.

Prince Sprite. A fairy Operetta. Music by Florence A. Marshall. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE libretto of this charming little work has been arranged from the fairy tale of the Countess D'Aulnoy by Miss Bertha Thomas with no little skill. The story has, we believe, been dramatised before under the title of "The Invisible Prince"; but the present version derives no little of its attractiveness from the simple yet graceful music with which it is associated. There is a bright overture for four hands, with violin *ad lib.*, and fifteen other numbers—choruses, duets, songs and instrumental pieces, including some graceful soft music, and some excellent dance measures. The vocal parts are well written, and show considerable knowledge of vocal effect and no little skill in writing for treble voices, so that it should command a welcome from those choral societies where female voices only are available for its utility in that respect. Its musical qualifications will be certain to secure favour for it wherever it is known.

Epiphany; or, The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. A Cantata. Words selected and arranged by the Rev. James Baden Powell. The music composed by Alfred King, Mus. Doc. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

As a rule, the exercises written for academical purposes stand in rank equal in the most part to "Kapellmeister-musik." Dr. King's Cantata is an exception to the rule. There is not only all that is required to "satisfy the examiners" in the matter of scholastic requirements, but there is something besides in the existence of artistic feeling and dramatic design which they, in common with all musicians, are glad to recognise even though it is beyond the requirements. The indications to be traced in the pianoforte part show thoughtful orchestral ideas, the solos and part-writing are in all respects graceful and vocal, and although the part-writing would tax the resources of ordinary choral societies, they would be all the better for an intimate knowledge of the work.

Loving, yet Lost. Song. Words written by E. Oxenford. Music composed by Frank Peskett.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE perfect agreement between the sentiment of the words and the musical setting is one of the most noteworthy features of this excellent little song. Another will be found in the fitness of the melody for the voice of the singer, for the phrases are well designed for effective vocalisation. The accompaniment is good and characteristic.

The Sleep. Song. By E. M. Lawrence.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THERE is much that is earnest in this setting of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's words, and much that indicates good intentions as yet not wholly controlled by experience. It is suitable to a mezzo-soprano voice, and, if given with due expression, would be most effective.