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Ye Gallant Men of England. Four-Part Song by Edwin Waugh; Edward Hecht; The Moorland Witch. Four-Part Song by Edwin Waugh; Edward Hecht

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due to the Oratorio Society is not full when the record of its direct accomplishment is written—there remain the products of its influence. Mr. Thomas's Chorus Society can fairly be counted amongst its fruits, and it has either stimulated to new life or caused the organization of a number of societies in Newark, Jersey City, Nyack, Rochester, and other places." Mr. Krehbiel (who is, we believe, musical critic of the *New York Tribune*) has done good service by the publication of this book; and we commend it to the attention of all who take interest in the healthy progress of choral music.

Requiem (H moll) für vier Solostimmen, Chor, und grosses Orchester. Auf den lateinischen Text componirt von Felix Draeseke (Op. 22). [Leipzig: Kistner.]

THE name of Herr Draeseke is one which has not yet made its way in England, though the composer is by no means a young man, having been born in 1835 at Coburg. We are not in a position to give much information about him, as the biographical notices to which we have access are very scanty. We learn from Mendel's "Conversations-Lexicon" that he was educated at the Conservatoire in Leipzig, whence he went to Weimar, where he became intimate with Liszt and his pupils, especially Hans von Bülow. The article from which we obtain our information speaks of him as a "talented but highly eccentric composer," and sums up its notice by stating that the great fault of his works are diffuseness and irregularity of form, concluding with the expression of the hope that when the composer has passed through the period of youthful exuberance he may produce something more important and more valuable.

It is impossible to pronounce a final opinion upon any work so elaborate in character as the "Requiem" now before us from a mere reading of the vocal score, especially as the accompaniment contains no indications of the instrumentation. Besides this, it must be remembered that in nearly all modern music many passages will be found, of which the most experienced musician can hardly realise the full effect without hearing them, to say nothing of the well-known fact that many things sound better than they look on paper. Our remarks on Herr Draeseke's work must therefore be taken with a certain amount of reserve. Still, there are leading characteristics of the music about which it is hardly possible to be greatly mistaken. Foremost among these are the vagueness and irregularity of the forms, and the undecided tonality. For example, the opening movement commences with a "ground bass" of five bars in length, first given out by the basses alone, after which the solo voices enter in succession. This would be an intelligible enough way of beginning but for the fact that the ground bass itself cannot be said to be in any key. It certainly commences and ends in B minor; but an A natural and a C natural, which are foreign to that key, are introduced in such a manner as to disturb all the feeling of tonality, and in the first three pages of the movement there are hardly two consecutive bars in the same key. Again, while there are several movements in the work, which are obviously intended as fugues, there is not a single one of these in which the subject receives its correct answer. This probably results from the fact that the subjects themselves are too vague to convey a distinct impression of either a tonic or dominant key. Take, for instance, the theme of the "Kyrie"—

It would be difficult to say whether this is meant to be in B minor or in D major; from the fact that the answer commences on B, we presume the former, though then the A natural is out of the key; but if it is in B minor, the C sharp at the end of the second bar should be answered by G sharp, whereas we find G natural. Another explanation may of course be that the subject is in the old Æolian mode; but if this view be taken, the answer is still incorrect, and the subject unsatisfactory from its vagueness. The same unclearness of form characterises to a greater or less extent the whole work. Strained, harsh, and positively ugly modulations are of constant occurrence,

and we honestly confess that we have seldom examined a new composition with more regret and even irritation at misapplied and wasted talent. That the work is clever we do not deny; occasionally Herr Draeseke has natural and even pleasing ideas; but the constant effort to be new, at whatever cost, makes the music most unpleasant to listen to. It is of course possible, perhaps even probable, that many things would sound less harsh when the dissonances were allotted to different qualities of orchestral tone than when they are played on the piano; and, as we have already said, we give our opinion of the work with some reserve. We see that the "Requiem" is announced to be given in London during the present season by the London Musical Society, and shall be very glad if the performance shall cause us to modify the unfavourable view of the music which we have derived from its perusal.

Primers of Musical Biography.

Gioacchino Rossini. By Joseph Bennett.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE prospectus of these Primers of Musical Biography tells us how the series of papers in THE MUSICAL TIMES, originally entitled "The Great Composers, sketched by themselves," grew under the hand of their author until they became complete biographies, and that the favour with which they were received led to their publication in a separate form, several additions being made to those written under the early title. In their present shape they will certainly prove highly valuable to the musical student, as well as to the many who desire to know something of the character of those who have by their compositions so thoroughly won their sympathy. The life of Rossini traces the composer's career with remarkable minuteness, considering the space at the disposal of the author, several extracts from the musical journals of the time materially aiding the interest of the narrative. Many of the anecdotes scattered throughout the volume are extremely good, the following, even if not true, being sufficiently characteristic of Rossini's *sang froid* to be quoted: "On one occasion, as the Monarch (George IV.) and Rossini were engaged in singing a buffo duet, the august bass stopped, exclaiming that he was wrong in the time. 'Sire,' answered the composer, 'you have the right to do what you please. Go on; I will follow you, even to the tomb.' Go on they did, the royal performer at his sweet will, the other in courtly attendance."

Ye Gallant Men of England. Four-part Song.

The Moorland Witch. Four-part Song.

Poetry by Edwin Waugh. Composed by Edward Hecht.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE two compositions (published in the second series of "Novello's Part-Song Book") are favourable examples of Mr. Hecht's style, and will form welcome additions to the *répertoire* of Choral Societies. The first has an appropriately bold theme, most artistically harmonised, and with some effective changes of key. The very quaint words of the second song have received a truly sympathetic setting. The alternations between 2-4 and 6-8 rhythms are extremely happy, and a characteristic use is made of the "chord of the thirteenth," where the phrase closes in the major key. There are many good points in this well-considered vocal piece which will fully repay careful practice.

Te Deum and Benedictus in F. By Charles L. Williams.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE organist of Gloucester Cathedral states that in this Service he has made use of the ancient plain song of the Church. This is true; but only in a limited sense. Some passages have a pleasantly archaic character, but the greater part of the music is essentially modern, more particularly in certain very abrupt transitions of key. In this respect the "Benedictus" is more advanced than the "Te Deum," but we prefer the latter to the former, as containing the most striking points. Mention may be made of the treatment of the words "The sharpness of death," and "in glory everlasting," as two out of several effective episodes. Though the voices are occasionally divided into eight parts, the counterpoint is for the most part note against note, and the Service is neither too difficult nor too elaborate for ordinary use.