Review

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At St. Mary's, Kilburn, on February 28, Spohr's "God, Thou art great," was sung at the monthly Cantata Service, which is held at the Church after the evening service. Mr. Edgar Pettman, director of the choir, presided at the organ. These services are becoming increasingly popular in the neighbourhood.

THE Kyrle Choir gave a performance of Mendelssohn's "Elijah" at the Congregational Church, Canning Town, on the 15th ult. The soloists were Miss Ada Loaring, Miss Ball, Mr. Herbert Clinch, and Mr. George Tate. Mr. F. A. W. Docker conducted, and Dr. E. H. Turpin presided at the organ.

THE little pastoral play entitled "The Dryad" was performed for the second time, on the 19th ult., at Toynbee Hall. The parts were sustained by Miss Bass, Mrs. Fagan, Miss M. C. Foley, Miss Dobie, and the author, Mrs. Christina Denning.

STAINER'S "Crucifixion" is being given, alternately with Mendelssohn's "Hear my Prayer" and "Christus," at the Wednesday Lenten performances at St. Mark's, Notting Hill. Mr. Warren Tear presides at the organ, and the solos are sung by members of the choir.

THE abridged version of Bach's Passion Music (St. Matthew) will be sung at a special Service to be held in St. Paul's Cathedral on the Tuesday in Passion week, according to the usual custom.

THE Cremona Orchestral Society gave its first Orchestral Concert on the 8th ult., in the Iron Hall, Askew Road, Shepherd's Bush. The Society now numbers over forty members, and the Hon. Conductor is Mr. J. Stansfeld.

A POPULAR edition of Professor H. C. Banister's "George Macfarren: his Life, Works, and Influence," has just been published by Messrs. George Bell and Sons.

MR. ALBERT FRANSELLA has recently been appointed as Principal Flute in the Crystal Palace Orchestra.

REVIEWS.

Wagner as I knew him. By Ferdinand Praeger.
[Longmans, Green and Co.]

DR. EDUARD HANSLICK, the well-known Viennese musical critic and aesthete, who had long been regarded as an active opponent of Richard Wagner, on writing about the first performance of "Parsifal," protested that he had no objection to Wagner himself, and asserted that his strictures had been directed against the Wagnerites. Under the denomination of Wagnerites, he doubtless included composers who plagiarised Wagner; composers who, conscious of their inability to rival him, gave up composing altogether and employed their pens in expounding his works and theories; and that lesser fry of hangers-on who, by espousing his cause to the exclusion of everything else, contented themselves with basking in the master's reflected light.

The study of Wagnerism—which includes Wagner the man, Wagner the poet-musician, and his works, both musical and literary, has unfortunately become so much a matter of party feeling and contention, that any book on the subject, until it has been read, is naturally regarded with suspicion. In whichever class of Wagnerites specified above the late Ferdinand Praeger should most properly be placed, it may at once be avowed that his recently published book contains much which, on account of its novelty, is calculated to interest and satisfy both classes of readers—whether friends or opponents of the Wagnerian cause.

Friends—those hero-worshippers who prize every little anecdote or bit of gossip about their idol more than the study of his works—will find plenty to entertain them.

Opponents—especially those who have been actively employed—will rejoice that Praeger, who was fully alive to his friend's failings, has not sought to vindicate Wagner in all things, and has even furnished them with information which might serve as a handle for further condemnation.

Its title, "Wagner as I knew him," is an especially happy one, as indicating the general character of the book,

which, though it furnishes a tolerably complete account of Wagner's life and artistic career, is most properly to be regarded as complementary to Glasenapp's voluminous biography, the reminiscences of others, and the article contributed by Mr. Edward Dannreuther to the "Dictionary of Music and Musicians"—at once the most complete and the most concise which has appeared in any language. In dealing with his personal reminiscences of Wagner, Praeger must have found it a difficult matter to avoid obtruding his own personality. That he has not done so unduly, and has achieved his task with becoming modesty, is a highly satisfactory point.

Among the matters treated, which will be found absolutely or comparatively new to English readers, may be enumerated—(1) Incidents in Wagner's school-life, both at Dresden and Leipzig; (2) his first love, a Jewess; (3) his first wife, Minna Planer, a thoroughly amiable woman, who was devotedly attached to him, but incapable of fully sympathising with and comprehending his genius, his high artistic aim and ambition; (4) his first visit to London in 1839; (5) his sojourn in Paris, 1839-42; (6) his residence at Dresden (1842-9), a detailed account of the part he took in the Revolution there, and the composition of "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin"; (7) his flight and exile to Zürich (1849-61); (8) his visit to London as Conductor of the Philharmonic Society in 1855, which is minutely described from Praeger's personal observation and association with him at that period; (9) his visit to Paris and return to Germany in 1861. From this point up to the date of Wagner's death in 1883, except for a long series of letters written during 1861-5 and now published for the first time, Praeger's personal reminiscences become more and more sparse.

By no means its least interesting portion is that which treats of August Roeckel, a truly remarkable individual, who made Wagner a revolutionist and Praeger a Wagnerite; and, for the part he took in the Revolution of 1848-9, suffered thirteen years' imprisonment—a fate from which, it is made clear, Wagner only escaped by a mere accident.

True to the title of his book, Praeger abstains from lengthy disquisitions upon Wagner's works, both musical and literary. A notable exception, however, is made in favour of the pamphlet "Judaism in Music." Though not altogether agreeing with Wagner's estimate of the Jews, he gives a very full account of its contents, principally for the sake of showing that Wagner has treated the matter more from an artistic than from a personal point of view.

It is to be regretted that Praeger did not live to "see his book through the Press," as he would then have reaped the glory as well as the emolument of its publication. Further, on looking it through again, he would probably have modified it in several particulars, the treatment of which, as they stand, is partly due to the fact of their having been written down from his dictation—a mode of procedure which weakness of sight and hand compelled him to adopt in his latter days, and one which does not conduce to continuity and elegance of style or to accuracy of diction. As an instance of this, the name of Ronge, a priest at Dresden, who proposed certain alterations in the Roman Catholic ritual, and made himself otherwise obnoxious to the Church, comes out as "Wronger"; and the title of Wagner's pamphlet "A Communication to my Friends," is printed "Commutation," &c. He would no doubt also have remodelled the dedicatory letter addressed to the Earl of Dysart, which is dated as far back as June 15, 1885. The very first sentence of this, which speaks of his intimacy with Wagner as "an uninterrupted friendship of close upon half-a-century," is misleading, for it is not till we have reached page 219 that we learn that he did not make Wagner's personal acquaintance until he came to London in 1855, and that up to this time he was "but the reflection of August Roeckel," a mutual friend of his and Wagner's resident in Dresden, and with whom he had corresponded. Thus this "uninterrupted friendship of close upon half-a-century" is reduced to twenty-eight years. Praeger's statement that he was "Wagner's first and sole champion," and that it was through "his sole exertions that the Philharmonic Society in 1855 offered Wagner the post of Conductor" will surprise many, and in the interests of truth calls for confirmation or refutation.

It seems improbable that this can have been so from the fact that up to the summer of the previous year Praeger was strongly opposed to the "new German School," as appears from a letter which he addressed to the *Musical World* of July 24, 1854, and in which he gives an entertaining account of the Rotterdam Musical Festival of that year, and of his journey thither from Cologne in a Rhine steamboat in company with a number of German musicians and critics. These kept up an incessant discussion about music, "till at last," says Praeger, "I lost my patience, and told them roundly that their *Zukunfts-musik* (music of the future) was no better than *Deutschlands Zukunft* (the future of Germany)."

A letter of Wagner, to Liszt, dated London, May 16, 1855, seems to settle the question in favour of Sainton. Wagner writes therein: "Poor Klindworth has been ill all along, and the fact that I could undertake nothing with him has deprived me of a great pleasure. Besides him my intercourse is limited to Sainton, the leader of the orchestra, *who caused my ill-fated appointment here* (the italics are our own), and a certain Lüders, who lives with him. Both are ardently devoted to me, and do all in their power to make my stay here pleasant. Apart from this I frequently go to Praeger, a good soul." (N.B.—The last three words are omitted in Hueffer's translation of the "Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt.")

Notwithstanding the publication of this letter of Wagner's, Praeger wrote to the *Musical World* of July 28, 1888, in correction of a statement of the *Quarterly Review* that it was Sainton who proposed Wagner as Conductor of the Philharmonic Society's Concerts, and maintaining that it was he himself who had first made the suggestion to Sainton, and that on his passing it on to the directors of the Philharmonic Society he was invited to attend their meeting, when he gave them all the information they required. In this same letter, as evidence of his long acquaintance with Wagner as a composer and his skill as a conductor, he alludes to an article on the performance of "Rienzi" at Dresden, which he had contributed to the *English Gentleman* in 1845. In his book he speaks of this as an article on "Tannhäuser." Evidently his memory here played him false, and having regard to his admission that up to 1854 he was "but the reflection of August Roeckel," it seems quite on the cards that the suggestion of Wagner's engagement came primarily from Roeckel, if not through him, from Wagner himself. As all seven directors of the Philharmonic Concerts of 1855 are dead, the matter is not an easy one to set at rest. To us, of the present day, it matters little from whom it emanated, nor should we have now thought it worth discussing, had not Praeger himself publicly raised the question, and that for the first time, as it appears, after a lapse of thirty years' silence.

We may seem to have laid too great a stress upon Praeger's inimical opinion of the "music of the future," expressed in his letter to the *Musical World* anent the Rotterdam Festival of 1854; but, having been cognisant of its existence and of its contents since the date of its publication, we could not do otherwise than refer to it. Ample evidence is afforded by letters, both from Wagner and Roeckel, contained in his book, that long previously to the Rotterdam Festival he had heard much about Wagner from his friend August Roeckel. Remarking upon one of the latter's, dated Dresden, March, 1843, he says: "I had such complete confidence in his (Roeckel's) perception and judgment that I was at once won over to Wagner's side by the tone of hero-worship that pervaded his letter." Wagner, too, in a letter of January 8, 1855, writes: "My heartiest thanks are due to you, my ardent champion in a strange land and among a conservative people. Your first espousal of my cause, ten years ago, when August read to me a vigorous article, from some English journal, by you on the "Tannhäuser" performance at Dresden, and the several evidences you have given subsequently of a devotion to my efforts, induce me to unhesitatingly throw the burden of somewhat wearisome arrangements upon your shoulders."

In attempting to reconcile these apparent discrepancies, we are therefore driven back upon the assumption that at the date of the Rotterdam Festival Praeger's opposition to the "New School," like Hanslick's, was not directed against Wagner, the founder of it, but against his disciples;

or that he had good reasons for keeping his real opinions to himself until the proper time came for divulging them with effect.

Notwithstanding the deficiencies which we have thought it but right to point out, "Wagner as I knew him" is a remarkable book. Singularly free from the "scissors and paste" element of ordinary biographical compilers, it furnishes us with an independent view of the life and career of certainly the greatest musical genius that, since Beethoven, has shed a lustre upon the present century.

Six Morceaux pour le Violoncelle avec accompagnement de piano. Par J. Hollman. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE pieces are respectively entitled "Légende," "Pizzicati," "Aubade," "Andante," "Petite Valse," and "Tarantelle," a sufficient proof of their variety. It will be taken for granted that they are so written as to display to the best advantage the characteristics of the instrument which their composer handles with such consummate skill. Let us add that these qualities are but a small portion of their merits, which include a rare degree of melodic and expressive charm, much freshness of treatment, and an entire freedom from the modern vice of straining after effect. Excessive difficulty being equally conspicuous by its absence, it is clear that Mr. Hollman has deserved well of violoncellists.

FOREIGN NOTES.

POPE LEO XIII. has addressed a circular letter to eminent composers in Europe and the United States requesting their co-operation in his efforts to bring about a reform in the domain of sacred music, which, in his holiness's opinion, partakes too much of a mundane and theatrical character in the present day.

A commemorative tablet was, on February 20 last, placed against the house, via Lamarmora, at Cagliari, where the great tenor Mario first saw the light. The tablet bears the following inscription in Italian: "In this house was born, of noble parentage, on October 17, 1810, Mario de Candia, distinguished in the vocal art; an enchanter of the world, an honour to his country."

Pietro Mascagni is busily engaged upon the score of his new opera, "I Rantzau," the subject of which is again drawn from one of Erckmann-Chatrian's stories. According to some Italian papers, the opera is to be first brought out at the Imperial Opera, of Vienna, during next autumn, while others name the Teatro Pagliano, of Florence, as being the lyrical stage selected for the *première*, and even give the names of the artists cast for the principal parts.

Baron Franchetti, the composer of "Asraël," gave a private performance of some extracts from his new opera "Christoforo Columbus," last month, at Milan. The opera will be first performed at Genoa, in connection with the Columbus celebrations.

At the Teatro Parthenope, of Naples, a new operetta, with a really comic libretto from the pen of Signor Paolo Marulli, entitled "Nini la scuffiara," was produced last month with much success. The composer is Signor Gaetano Scognamiglio.

Two new operas are announced to be brought out shortly at the Teatro Bellini, of Naples—viz., "Maestro Giorgio," by Signor Sodero, and "Mercedes," by the Maestro Pellegrino.

An interesting Concert, on a grand scale, was given last month by the Sociedad de Concertos, of Madrid, at the Teatro Principe Alfonso in that capital, with the co-operation of the orchestra and chorus of the Opera, members of military bands, and some fifty juvenile voices. The programme consisted almost entirely of works by Wagner, including orchestral portions of "Rhinegold" and "Tristan und Isolde," and the entire *Finale* of the first act of "Parsifal." The reception of these excerpts by a Spanish audience was a most enthusiastic one, mingled with some occasional opposition on the part of a small minority. Signor Mancinelli conducted the performances.

Herr Felix Weingartner, the able Conductor of the Berlin Royal Opera, has just completed an opera entitled "Genesisius," which is to be shortly produced at the theatre in question.