Review

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Die Musik des Griechischen Alterthumes nach den alten quellen neu bearbeitet, von Rudolf Westphal.
[Leipzig, 1883.]

THE veteran philologist has been long silent since his last well-known work on Ancient Greek music. Many—or perhaps we should say a few—of our readers will be pleased to know that Herr Westphal has returned to the subject in a work of some importance, which he has gratefully dedicated to Herren H. Weil, of the Academy of Belles-Lettres at Paris; Ch. Em. Ruelle, librarian of St. Genevieve, at Paris; and F. A. Gevaert, director of the Brussels Conservatorium, &c., &c. In the preface or introduction to the present work, which in its entirety we may review more at length on some future occasion, Herr Westphal again goes over the well-indexed but not very extensive list of authors, ancient and modern, who have treated of Greek music. He speaks of Aristoxenus as a not less deep thinker than his master Aristotle, and amongst the ancients looks to him, and finally to Ptolemy, as the great fountains of our knowledge on the subject. He pays high tributes of praise to Wallis, Böch, and Bellerman, amongst modern and recent editors and commentators; and in mentioning his own contributions he observes that his opinions in regard to the Greek Melos have been received by some of his German fellow-workers with mistrust, and even with enmity; but he adds: “I had already forsaken Germany when there appeared that exhaustive work, ‘Histoire et Théorie de la Musique de l’Antiquité,’ by Frederick Augustus Gevaert, Ghent, 1875-1881, in which the learned inquirer acknowledges in every point his indebtedness to my Greek *Harmonik*, that is based on the nomenclature of the positional-scale-system of Ptolemy, and wherein on that system is clearly explained the non-unisonal accompaniment of Greek melody.”

Herr Westphal tells us that he first paid attention to the subject of Greek melody at the end of his fiftieth year. From the study of Bellerman he turned to the ancient texts, and in 1863 published his “*Harmonik*.” A second edition, with certain further explanations in regard to the Greek tone-system, appeared in 1867. In respect to his present work, he claims for it the same solid foundation on original texts and ancient sources, and he tells us that it is virtually the same system he presented in his previous work, but that it differs throughout in the method of arrangement. Herr Westphal has been reproached for writing on Greek music as a philologist and for philologists, just as physicists and acousticians write on music as scientists for scientists, but following perhaps the example of M. Gevaert, he has this time treated the history and systems of ancient Greek music in a style suited to musicians and amateurs who are not inclined to trouble themselves with Greek type and notation, and philology. Herr Westphal in his new work has some important chapters on the Greek rhythmical system; and in regard to this subject he tells the musician that by the study of the theories of Aristoxenus he will find that he has to unlearn much that he has learned from modern theorists. Westphal seems to think that neither Beethoven nor Mozart represented the Greek rhythmical feeling and theory, which, amongst the moderns, are found only in the music of Sebastian Bach. As a close and industrious seeker after the truth of the whole of the vexed question of Greek music in its original sources, the veteran philologist more than once expresses his disdain for the phantasies and divinings by the aid of which some musicians and authors create systems of Greek music. He treats the subject of Greek music not only as serious from an archæological point of view, but as one of great practical importance to the musical art; and closes one of his introductory chapters with this quotation from Gevaert: “The music of the ancients, which I had until then considered as a subject absolutely devoid of interest, suddenly appeared to me in a new light; I saw in it an object of value to the musician, and worthy of his whole attention.”

This revelation occurred to Gevaert after his study of Westphal’s “*Metrik*,” which led him to pursue the subject and elucidate it, and, as he has told us lately, not without a practical object. We may assume that both he and Westphal, now that certain parts of the Greek system have been made clearer and seem in many respects to

more and more resemble the modern system, are of opinion that musicians will soon find that Greek music has more than a merely antiquarian interest. Westphal observes, in the book we are noticing, that more than two thousand years before the historical twelve major and twelve minor scales of Bach’s well-tempered clavier, the same thing had been accomplished by the Aristoxenian innovation in regard to the Greek transposition-scales. The twelve scales, or “*Tones*,” were of course a device arising from the temperament, as anyone can find by simply inverting the modern major scale of C natural. From the scale and its inversions we get eleven tonics. The twelfth is F sharp. To retain the twelve sounds in the equally tempered scale, we have to invert the F sharp as again F sharp. Inverting it regularly as G flat, gives us the canonical and Aristoxenian number of thirteen tones. We soon leave these commonplaces, when we remember that each tone had its double-octave system containing seven forms of scale; the “*eidōs*,” or form of scale; being the *Mode*. In the modern system each mode is, or can be, transposed, so as to commence on the key-note. Hence, perhaps our term “*minor-key*.” Again, in the Greek system, each double-octave system was of the genus diatonic, chromatic, or enharmonic; and each of these genera had various ratios; and the original nomenclature of the tones, such as Lydian, Phrygian, &c., became changed by transpositions in higher or lower octaves; and the *modes* also, from sundry causes, not yet made very clear, received different names, such as Eolian, Locrian, Bætian, &c.; the whole system, together with great subtleties and refinements in regard to accent and rhythm, becoming a most complicated mechanism, which Westphal well characterises as *die umfangreichsten Melopöien des Griechenthumes*. Those who are acquainted with his former works will not require to be told that in this, his last work on the subject, the history, harmony, metre, and rhythm of the Greek system have been treated by Westphal with consummate learning and penetration. As our intention was simply to refer to certain points in the introduction, we have only to repeat that the present work is adapted expressly to the requirements of musicians.

Valse in B flat minor. Gavotte. Composed for the Pianoforte by Gordon Saunders.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

BOTH these compositions are commendable specimens of refined and artistic dance movements. Dr. Saunders disarms any charge of imitation which might be brought against him by calling his Valse “*A la Chopin*”; but we cannot help expressing a wish that he had relied more upon himself, for he has amply shown in his Gavotte that he has sufficient artistic capital to hold his way without borrowing. Apart from the Chopin character of the Valse, however, we prefer the last-named piece, which is a good honest Gavotte, and may be conscientiously recommended to the many amateur pianists who so extensively patronise this class of music.

The Bible Psalter. By Sir Herbert Oakeley.

[Nisbet and Co.]

THIS work cannot be of service in the Church of England, as there is no likelihood of the Prayer Book version of the Psalms being superseded. In the northern country and among dissenting communities it may, however, be very useful. The pointing is simple and, on the whole, commendable. Sir Herbert Oakeley avows his preference for double, or, as he terms them, “*whole*,” chants, and his book contains a very good selection, some of the old florid abominations being deprived of superfluous crotchets and thus made to assume an air of soberness and dignity undreamed of by their composers.

Quatuor pour 2 Violons, Alto et Violoncelle. Par Charles Dancla. [F. W. Chanot.]

QUARTETS must be heard to be justly criticised; but an examination of the score of M. Dancla’s work inclines us to believe that it possesses very high merit. The subjects are exceedingly attractive and the writing clear and spontaneous throughout. We may say that the composition obtained the prize from “*La Société des Compositeurs de Musique*,” at Paris, in 1882.