Review

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Reviews.

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

A Morning, Communion, and Evening Service. Composed by Samuel Reay, Mus. Bac., Oxon.

AMONGST the many musical settings of the Canticles which have appeared during the past twenty years, few will be found more useful in choirs, and places where they sing, than the one under notice. Mr. Reay has long been known as a talented organist, and particularly as the composer of some of the most popular part-songs of the day. It could not fail, therefore, to be a matter of considerable interest to note how far he would succeed in the higher and more important branch of the art. His proficiency in vocal writing was greatly in his favour, and his well known command of the technicalities of the Organ, would seem to supply the only remaining thing requisite. But, of course, those who look more deeply into things are well aware that many other qualifications are necessary to the production of sacred music properly so called, and that a musical organization is required to be singularly complete and well balanced to succeed in any remarkable degree in the composition of music for the Church. That Mr. Reay possesses many, if not most, of these qualifications, few who have examined these Services would venture to deny. That he possesses all, no sensible person would expect. Enough that he has produced a work which will take its place on terms of equality with many of the best of the old Church Services, and, what is of perhaps more value, displace some of the imitations of ancient work, which as music is contemptible, and viewed as an aid to devotion is beneath contempt. It would take too much space were all the musicianly points in this work enumerated and described, but a few instances may be cited, if only as examples to younger and less experienced musicians.

To commence with the Te Deum. It is everywhere apparent that there is no lack of resource; one idea follows another easily, and without the slightest appearance of effort. At the same time there is evident a certain reticence or reserve of power, which appears to be one of the invariable characteristics of a work of true art. It is also worthy of notice how Mr. Reay has repeated the same subject in different parts of the setting, and has thus bound the composition into one homogenous whole. For instance, the same phrase does duty for "We praise Thee, O God," and "Day by day we magnify Thee,"—a most felicitous union of textual and musical sentiment. Again "The glorious company of the Apostles," with the two succeeding verses are sung to the same music as "Thou art the King of Glory," and "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted." Thus cognate sentiments which by some church composers are not even realized, are here carefully emphasized and connected. A little pedantry in the shape of a canon (four in two, in the octave) is exhibited in the Gloria Patri to the Jubilate, but it is amply condoned by its effectiveness and position. The setting of the Kyrie is also much to be commended, despite its somewhat undefined tonality. The Creed has been most judiciously set to the simplest of music, principally in recitative and unison. This, as implying that all should be enabled to join in the recitals of the fundamental elements of their faith can hardly be too strongly commended. In the Sanctus the music appears to fail in rising to the height of the subject. As abstract music it is good, but as a setting of the Song of Angels, it is less commendable. Nor does the music to the Gloria in excelsis wholly succeed in expressing that intensity of jubilation which the subject would seem to demand. The Magnificat possesses a point of considerable beauty, a short interlude for the organ serving to introduce the soli quartett on the words, "He remembering his mercy," with charming effect. These are, however, but a few of the many good things to be found in this Service.

Capriccio, in E minor, for the Pianoforte. Composed by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Op. 118.

THIS *Capriccio*, forming No. 47 of the second series of Mendelssohn's Posthumous Works, will afford unqualified pleasure to pianists, and renew the feeling of wonder that such treasures should so long have remained unpublished. That Mendelssohn himself may have had valid reasons for withholding many of his works from the public is scarcely to be wondered at by any who know how resolute was his desire thoroughly to satisfy himself in every composition

which he gave to the world; but pieces which he might consider imperfect are so much better than those which many other composers consider perfect that they cannot but be received with a cordial welcome whenever they appear. A brief but melodious Andante, in E major, precedes the Allegro in this *Capriccio*, the writing in which is remarkably finished throughout. A close upon the dominant leads to the subject in E minor, a simple phrase founded on the triad of the key-note, in semiquavers for both hands, which is introduced in various keys in the progress of the piece. A beautiful melody, in the relative major, with some charming passages of syncopation, forms a most refreshing contrast with the principal theme; and the artistic manner in which the leading ideas are afterwards developed gives a continuous interest to the composition which cannot fail to attract both performer and listener. We shall doubtless shortly hear this *Capriccio* in the concert-room; but in the meantime we may gratify those numerous amateurs who are lovers of Mendelssohn's works by informing them that it is by no means one of his most difficult pieces.

Quanti Mai. Words by Metastasio.

Evening Song. (The Shadows of the Evening Hours), with obligato accompaniment for the Viola. Words by Adelaide Anne Procter.

Composed by Ch. Gounod.

THE theme of the first of these songs is made additionally attractive by a most characteristic accompaniment in *staccato* semiquavers, which (save in the comparatively short *legato* portion, which sympathises with the melody) runs obstinately against the voice part throughout. The harmonies are written with extreme care; and the sequence of sevenths, with a moving bass, which occurs on the third page, is exceedingly interesting. After the change in the form of the accompaniment, the return to the original subject comes with much effect; and a good point is gained by making the voice conclude on the fifth of the key-note harmony, lengthened out whilst the pianoforte part gradually dies off. This composition requires only to be known to become popular. The "Evening Song" has an extremely placid and melodious subject, the feeling of the words having been studied by the composer with commendable earnestness. In the symphony the viola commences the melody, accompanied by the pianoforte. The voice then begins, and is shortly joined by the viola, with an independent part, skilfully woven in with the theme, and in the highest degree effective. The treatment of the phrase, "Oh, give us now repose," is full of feeling, the changes of key giving the utmost eloquence to the expression of the words. The last few bars of the song, too, are extremely beautiful, the voice dwelling upon the key-note, with the chromatic ascent of the viola, against the descending bass, the repetition of the instrumental phrase becoming the concluding symphony. We can scarcely doubt that this song will shortly be sung in public, where, with a good vocalist and two equally competent instrumentalists, its success would be certain.

Ave Maria. Song. Words from the "Lady of the Lake." Music by Edward L. Hopkins, B.A.

THERE is so much artistic feeling thrown into this "Ave Maria" that it cannot but give pleasure to all whose taste has been sufficiently cultivated to separate reality from pretence amongst the multitude of compositions daily issuing from the music publishers. It is true that the theme is simplicity itself, but then it is this very simplicity that charms, when united with that skilful and sympathetic treatment which effectually prevents its degenerating into insipidity. The subject, in 6-8 rhythm, is highly appropriate to the words, and gains much interest by a moving quaver accompaniment, the character of which is preserved, with but slight intermission, throughout. Commencing in D flat major, the modulation into F has an extremely fresh effect; and much skill is shown in the return to the key, the progression of harmony, to the words "Ave Maria," leading the ear agreeably back to the starting point. Judging not only from this song, but from one which we recently noticed by the same composer, we have conceived a high opinion of Mr. Hopkins's power of writing good vocal music; and shall be glad to meet him again as the author of works of higher importance.

The Blind Organist. Song. Words from the German by the Rev. J. G. Bailey, M.A. Composed by Alfred Alexander.

A PLACID symphony of eight bars introduces the melody of this song, which well expresses the feeling of the words.