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The Girl to Her Bird by Hamilton Aidè; A. G. Thomas

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with musical as well as unmusical hearers. After a brief instrumental introduction, the Cantata opens with a soprano solo, followed by a chorus. This solo, commencing on the final crotchet of the bar, which is bound to the first crotchet of the next bar, is agreeable enough musically; but the syncopation compels such a false accent to the words that we cannot reconcile ourselves to the phrase. A short soprano recitative precedes an important chorus, which contains two movements contrasted in character, and includes some well considered and effective points. The Scena for contralto, "While the Bridegroom tarried," is vocal and full of interest; but the solo with chorus which follows is somewhat laboured, and scarcely tones with the rest of the Cantata. The Trio, "They that be wise shall shine as the firmament," is an exceedingly graceful and melodious specimen of part-writing, and may probably make its way out of the work for which it was written. After a recitative the graceful chorus "The Virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company" follows with much effect. Perhaps the best-written piece in the work is the succeeding chorus in A minor, "Lord, Lord, open to us," the choral response to which, in F major, "Not every one that saith to me 'Lord! Lord!'" is exceedingly dramatic and in true sympathy with the words, some good imitative passages occurring towards the latter portion of the chorus. The Cantata ends with a repetition of the opening phrase, slightly altered, in chorus. There is no monotony in key nor in style throughout this work, but there is a monotony in rhythm which we cannot but think must be felt in performance; for—with the exception of the brief chorus in A minor, and the equally brief Trio—every piece is in 4-4 time. We perceive that the Cantata is scored for the orchestra; and should be glad to hear it with that instrumental colouring which no doubt carries out the composer's original intention, for in parts the pianoforte accompaniment sounds thin. No work written for an orchestra can be fairly judged by a pianoforte reduction of the score; and every writer, therefore, who instruments his composition should, as Dr. Hiles does, state the fact upon his title-page. As the work is by no means difficult of execution, we especially commend it to the attention of the many metropolitan and provincial choirs in search of novelty. A Cantata of moderate length, and demanding no exceptional solo or choral power, should be a boon to concert-givers who are desirous of performing entire works, and yet not ambitious enough to battle with the intricacies of full Oratorios.

*Christmas Album.* Twenty-four Pieces for the Pianoforte. Composed by P. Tchaikowsky. [Neumeyer and Co.]

WORKS especially dedicated to the festive season of the year must not be kept waiting for a notice; and although the Album now before us comes too late to be recommended as a Christmas present, we may urge it upon the attention of parents and guardians as a most appropriate New Year's Gift. No doubt Schumann has set the fashion of writing quaint little pianoforte pieces with equally quaint titles; and perhaps in the present day this fashion—like most others—is almost worn to death; but when we get fanciful sketches as good as we find scattered throughout this volume they may be certain of a cordial welcome. We say "scattered throughout" the book, because all are not equally entitled to praise; but amongst the two dozen pieces none are bad, and many are really excellent. Of course it is difficult, indeed impossible, to realise musically such titles as "The young Lord," "Mamma," "The New Doll," or "Grandmother's Story"; but this objection may be urged as much against Schumann's "Kinderszenen" as against the "Christmas Album"; and we cannot afford to ignore good music, even of such simple construction. Our especial favourites in this collection are the "March of the Toy Soldiers," "Dolly is ill" (an appropriately pathetic piece in G minor, in which the moanings of the much loved invalid are admirably suggested), "Happy Dream" (a really charming "song without words"), "The Swallow's chirping," and "The Hurdy-Gurdy." All those we have mentioned are of course peculiarly fitted for illustration; but there are very many not lending themselves as well to musical treatment, which may be equally acceptable to the young performer.

*The Child's Book of Praise.* A Manual of Devotion, in Simple Verse, by C. F. Hernaman. With accompanying Tunes, edited by C. A. Barry. [J. T. Hayes, Joseph Masters and Co., and Novello, Ewer and Co.]

"ONE of the last undertakings of the late lamented Dr. J. B. Dykes," says the editor of this work, in his preface, "was that of preparing a musical edition of 'The Child's Book of Praise,' by C. F. Hernaman, the text of which, with a preface by the Rev. Jas. Skinner, had already been published in 1873." Unfortunately the death of Dr. Dykes happened when he had completed but five tunes for the book, and received one or two others from friends; but his plan of soliciting musical contributions from others to add to his own compositions was carried on by Mr. Barry, and the result is a work which reflects the utmost credit upon those who have so zealously laboured in the cause. The five tunes by Dr. Dykes are not only excellent, musically speaking, but deeply sympathetic with the words to which they are allied, No. 8, "Easter," especially being noticeable for its simple eloquence and appropriateness to the season for which it is written. The other contributors are Dr. G. B. Arnold, W. A. Barrett, Mus. Bac., Henry Gadsby, Dr. E. G. Monk, Professor Sir Herbert Oakeley, Mus. Doc., Rev. A. B. Orr, Sir F. A. Gore Ouseley, C. Hubert H. Parry, Ebenezer Prout, Dr. Stainer, C. E. Stephens, Professor Sir R. P. Stewart, Mus. Doc., C. Villiers Stanford, and the editor, who although having furnished a large number—indeed the largest number—of tunes, has modestly reserved the smaller hymns for himself. It would be invidious where all are so good to select any particular compositions for praise; but we may say generally that the many eminent artists who have assisted in the work have worthily sustained their reputation; and that either in children's services, at school or in the home circle, this little Manual of Devotion will be found most valuable.

*The Girl to her Bird.* Words by Hamilton Aidè. Music by A. G. Thomas. [Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

MR. THOMAS is a stranger to us; but his song is the work of an artist. We are always frightened of vocal pieces in which any reference is made to a bird; for what may be described as the conventional "twiddle" on the pianoforte is almost certain to occur whenever an opportunity offers, and very often when it does not. The composer of this artless little ballad has, however, very properly given a musical setting rather to the feeling than to the words of the poetry; and the result is a charming little duet for voice and pianoforte, which we cordially commend to the attention of vocalists in search of novelty. We are particularly pleased with the treatment of the phrase "O let me fly," the long-held G for the voice, on the dominant harmony of C, dropping through the seventh to the key-note, expressing the words most sympathetically. Mr. Thomas might, we think, with tolerable certainty, calculate upon an equal amount of success in some more important work.

*A Swing-Song, for the Pianoforte.* By Eugene Woycke. [Paterson and Son.]

SWING-SONGS, like all pieces in which the rhythmic character so materially assists the composer in his work, are multiplying fast. Marches, Gavottes, Mazurkas, Bourrées, &c., flood the market; and their authors, therefore, must not be surprised if we begin to judge such compositions not so much by their adherence to the orthodox type as to their abstract musical merits. Whether, then, we can obtain the "swinging" effect in the piece before us by obeying the composer's direction to mark every half-bar powerfully is scarcely so important a consideration as whether he has written a good composition; and, viewing it in this light, we cannot accord it any very high praise. The subject is not particularly striking, and the enharmonic change after the second double bar seems somewhat forced. Nevertheless, we think the piece would please, especially if its title be proclaimed, before performance, to all the listeners.

*The Psalmist.* A Collection of Tunes, Chants, and Anthems for Public Worship, and for Domestic and Family Use. [Haddon and Co., and Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS book appeared many years ago in a less compendious form. We have from time to time noticed in these