Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 17, No. 390 (Aug. 1, 1875), p. 174

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3352827>

Accessed: 16-12-2015 03:14 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

"Phrygian mode," than that they are in "Form 5th of the model minor scale." Many of the explanations in the book are exceedingly good, but we regret to see that compound time is said to be two or three bars of triple time put together. That moving in triple divisions should be confounded with moving in triple time is unquestionably a misfortune, but it cannot be said to be a fault with a student who is told, as Mr. Spencer tells him, before giving some bars with triplets, that sometimes "one half of a measure is in duple time and the other half in triple time." Some of the examples of counterpoint are, we think, scarcely good enough to place as models before a tyro—as, for example, in the last bar of page 86, where the counterpoint skips from the discord, C, and 11th bar of Ex. 2, page 73, where we have only three G's on the first of the bar, the counterpoint afterwards rising to D—but, generally, the progressions are fairly good. In speaking of the Fugue, no rules are given for the construction of the answer; but many valuable extracts from the works of the best composers are placed before the student to guide him in his labours, and the author deserves much praise for the earnest manner in which he urges the necessity of diligently studying the highest models. The second book, which treats of the art of playing the pianoforte, is well considered throughout, the early lessons and the remarks on fingering being particularly worthy of commendation. Quotations from the compositions of Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, &c., are given, in illustration of the author's observations, most of which are carefully selected. We cannot believe, however, that it is good to transpose and vary passages from classical works for the use of young players, and must therefore protest against Example 45 (merely marked "from Beethoven"), where the opening theme of the Sonata in A flat (Op. 26) is transposed a semitone higher, not only the melody but the basses altered, and bars added at the conclusion, with the subject repeated an octave above. Not one of these alterations makes the passage in the slightest degree easier to play, and we may reasonably wonder, therefore, why such liberties are taken. In conclusion, it may be said that the books are carefully printed—so carefully indeed that Mr. Spencer will, we are certain, thank us for pointing out that, in the first work, the second subject given out by the alto in the Fugue in D minor, at the bottom of page 131, is wrongly noted: B $\flat$ and A should be quavers instead of semiquavers; it is a trifling error, but it may puzzle many students.

WEEKES & Co.

The Widow of Nain. An Oratorio, in one Part. The words compiled from the Holy Scriptures. Composed by John Abram, Mus. Doc., Oxon.

As a rule, it is perhaps well that those who publish the works which have been expressly written as an exercise for a Doctor's degree should state the circumstances which called the composition into existence. They are generally remarkably innocent of any originality of thought, but constructed so obviously with a desire to display that knowledge of fugue and counterpoint so essential in a Mus. Doc. that, although but few would care to listen to them save those whose melancholy duty places them in the position of Coleridge's "Wedding Guest" in the *Ancient Mariner*, there can be little doubt that, should they ever be engraved and circulated, they will be certain to excite respect, if not gratification. In Dr. Abram's Oratorio, however, although the laboured workmanship is occasionally somewhat too apparent, we have so much excellent material that we are tempted to believe, when the composer is free to write as he pleases, that he will produce something infinitely superior to the "Widow of Nain." The superabundance of choral matter gives a certain heaviness to the composition, which abstractedly is a defect; but, as we have already said, the desire to show the power of part-writing was, undoubtedly, the primary object, and we are bound, therefore, to criticise the composer solely according to what Carlyle terms his "line of endeavour." Viewed in this light, therefore, we

must award him unqualified praise. The opening chorus, written for a double choir, has many admirable points, the fugal treatment of the themes throughout evidencing not only the result of good training, but of a musical organisation, which, as we have already said, when less under restraint, cannot fail to be turned to excellent account. The orchestral accompaniments, too, in this movement are full of character, and, in every case, highly sympathetic with the varied feeling of the words. The following recitative and air for the tenor, although somewhat Mendelssohnian, breathe the spirit of the text so truthfully as to deserve the warmest praise. In the quartett "Lift up thine eyes," we have nothing remarkable save careful vocal writing, nor do we care much for the chorus "Seek ye the Lord," the ceaseless semiquaver accompaniment to which gives a feeling of monotony which somewhat detracts from the effect of the voice parts. The double chorus, "Blessed are they that mourn," next to the opening piece, will elicit the highest commendation from musicians: it is a vigorous and skilfully written movement, and might alone have proved the author's right to the honour which he sought: the management of the voices where the triplet accompaniment steals in for the first time is extremely happy, and the concluding phrases colour the words with remarkable fidelity. The soprano solo, "But the Lord," contains some expressive, if not very original, vocal sentences, which a good soprano may give much effect to. After a chorus somewhat dry in character, a melodious tenor solo, "Weep not," (in which the words are set with appropriate simplicity) and a clever double chorus, a soprano recitative leads to a solo for contralto, chorally accompanied, which is followed by one of the boldest choruses in the work, "Awake, awake," a vigorous orchestral figure giving much life to the vocal writing. The unaccompanied quartett, for soprano and contralto, may prove as successful as the very similar pieces which seem to be a necessary portion of every modern sacred work; but it has little musical interest. Passing over the tenor air, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," a recitative and chorus, a baritone air (the last-named, however, containing some good vocal phrases) and a contralto solo, "O taste and see," a chorus, quartett and chorus, with some effective orchestral points, will be found especially worthy of attention; the starting of the solo voices in the relative major, after a sudden pause on the dominant of F sharp minor, being particularly worthy of note. The fugue in the final chorus, "Blessed be the Lord God," is well wrought, and sustained with skill throughout, the movement (one of the best specimens of the composer's powers) forming a fitting termination to a work which reflects infinite credit upon Dr. Abram, and which, with all its faults, is so far above the average of such compositions as to have induced us to give it our serious attention.

Hymn Tunes, Chants and Kyries. Composed by James Young.

WE cannot see any merit in these jottings. Trite and commonplace melody, combined with faulty harmony, are observable on nearly every page. Why these twenty chants, twelve litanies, and sixteen hymn tunes should ever have passed into a second edition, we are at a loss to conceive. Amid the numerous faults which are worse, musically speaking, than are the literary errors of saying, "I is," and "we am," we can only give examples, such as the consecutive 2nd inversions in hymn No. 6, 5th to 6th bar; litanies No. 2, 2nd bar, No. 8, 3rd bar; double chant, No. 13, 5th to 6th bar, and in the same, 9th bar, the doubled 7th.

Six Hymn Tunes and Three Kyries. By G. H. Armstrong.

IF Mr. Armstrong will in future correct his proofs, have some regard for tonality (see No. 6), avoid continually coming to a full close, and doubling the 3rd when it occurs in the bass, we may be able to give unqualified praise to the next composition of his which comes under notice; but it is impossible to speak favourably of the good qualities he displays when they are so out-balanced by unmusically faults.