

Review

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Charles K. Salaman, and Dr. Stainer. Owners of rare examples of early printed music, who are willing to assist in the exhibition, can obtain the necessary particulars from any member of the committee.

A CONCERT was given on the 20th ult., by members of the vocal class of the Walworth Literary and Scientific Institute, assisted by Madame Adelina Moritz, Miss La Marchant and the Messrs. Pickering, Mullerhausen and others. The first part consisted of a Cantata by J. J. Haite, "Abraham's Sacrifice" which was very fairly given. Madame Adelina Moritz sang the music allotted her most charmingly. Miss La Marchant was encored in "Within a mile of Edinbro' town" and Mr. Mullerhausen in "Once again." On the whole, the concert reflected great credit on Mr. Reeves, the conductor.

MANY inquiries having been made respecting the position of the Purcell Society, we are requested to state that it now numbers 149 members. The first work to be published, the "Yorkshire Feast Song," is in the hands of the engravers, and the "Timon of Athens" is also ready to print. It is hoped, therefore, that these two works will be issued in the course of a month or two. All interested in the object of this Society should lose no time in joining it; for it will be seen that the number of members already enrolled is not so large as could be wished.

ON the 15th ult. Mr. J. B. Balfour gave his first evening concert at the Horns Assembly Rooms, Kennington. The vocalists were Mdles. Agnes Drummond, Josephine Pulham, F. Wydford, A. Harold, and A. Leigh, Messrs. Delamere, Vitten, A. Booth, and W. Hardy, all of whom gave satisfaction. Encores were awarded to Miss Josephine Pulham and Mr. Balfour. Miss Adelaide Pulham and Mr. E. Phillips contributed pianoforte solos, and Mr. Kensett two violin solos. Mr. C. P. Mann presided at the pianoforte.

MISS MARTHA HARRIES gave a Concert at the Shore-ditch Town Hall, on Thursday evening, the 8th ult., before a large audience. The artists were Mdme. Edith Wynne, Miss Lizzie Evans, Miss Marian Williams, Miss Mary Davies, Mr. James Sauvage, Mr. Frank Ward and Mr. H. P. Matthews, vocalists; Mr. Brinley Richards, solo pianoforte; and Mr. John Thomas, harpist. An excellent programme of popular music was exceedingly well rendered. Mr. Arthur J. Barth was an efficient accompanist.

A MUSICAL performance by the pupils of the London Society for Teaching the Blind to Read was given at the Institution, Upper Avenue Road, Regent's Park, on the 9th ult., when a carefully selected programme, chiefly of classical music, was excellently rendered, under the able conductorship of the Society's instructor, Mr. Edwin Barnes. During the concert the Dead March in "Saul" was played, in memory of the late G. Avery, Esq., Honorary Superintendent of the Institution.

A VERY well-attended Concert was given on Friday, the 16th ult., in the Myddelton Hall, Islington, at which Madame Edith Wynne, Misses Mary Davies, M. Williams, L. Evans, Bolingbroke, and Messrs. Lewis Thomas, Gordon Gooch, and James Sauvage, were the vocalists. Monsieur Albert contributed a violoncello solo, and Herr Polonaski, a "Cavatina," by Raff. Signor Randegger conducted with his usual ability, and was assisted by Mr. G. Hooper.

A CORRESPONDENT informs us, with reference to Mr. Henry Leslie's announcement of Bach's Motett, "Sing ye to the Lord," being performed by his choir "for the first time in England," that the work was given on the 12th May, 1870, by the "Windors and Eton Amateur Madrigal Society," under the conductorship of Sir George Elvey. The production of so abstruse a composition by what may be termed a country Society is assuredly an event to be proud of, and we willingly give publicity to the fact.

THE third Annual Concert of the Holloway Choral and Orchestral Society was given at the Athenæum, Camden Road, on the 26th February. The programme comprised excerpts from Mendelssohn's "St. Paul," Haydn's

"Surprise" Symphony, a Trio by Reissiger (Op. 58), admirably played by Mr. Bent (violin), Mr. T. Serjeant (violoncello), and Miss Bent (piano), and miscellaneous selections. Mr. H. Spencer, jun., conducted.

THE members of the St. Michael's Choral Society, Southwark, gave their first Sacred Concert, in St. Michael's Schools, on the 13th ult. The programme was admirably arranged, and well carried out. The principal vocalists were Miss A. Tapp, Miss E. Howgate, Miss A. Bear, Miss O'Bray, Messrs. Cooke, Nobbs, Winfield, Mott, and Irons. Mr. J. Fimister, organist of St. Michael's Church, ably accompanied throughout the evening.

THE following gentlemen were presented by Professor Macfarren on Thursday, the 22nd Feb., when the degree of Bachelor of Music was conferred upon them by the Vice Chancellor: Horton Claridge Allison (St. John's), John Morgan Bentley (Downing), Charles Joseph Frost (Sidney), Walter Edward Lawson (Queen's), George Oakey (St. John's), Edwin Charles Such (Trinity).

THE Southwark Choral Society gave its Annual Concert on the 20th ult., when a selection from Handel's "Joseph" was performed, and well received by a large audience. The second part of the Concert was miscellaneous. The vocalists were Mrs. J. West, Mrs. W. Shoveller, Mrs. Underwood, Miss Dear, and Mr. Bunker, and Mr. H. W. Harper (piano). Mr. Courtney conducted.

MISS MARION WOODS gave a Concert at Ladbroke Hall, Notting Hill, on Monday, the 26th February, assisted by Miss Kate Hardy, Madame Liebe Konss, Mdle. Alferri, Mr. Bayley, Mr. Newton Baylis, Mr. Barker, and Mr. Maisey. The programme was well selected and the songs excellently rendered, Miss Woods and Miss Hardy being especially well received.

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. James Frederick Hill, who was for twenty-five years Choral Master at the Norfolk and Norwich Musical Festivals, relinquishing this post only when failing health demanded a cessation of such arduous duties. Mr. Hill was well known and much respected both in London and provincial musical circles.

THE 139th anniversary Festival of the Royal Society of Musicians will take place at Willis's Rooms, on the 18th inst., under the presidency of the Right Hon. Lord Skelmersdale. As usual, many eminent members of the profession have already volunteered their services on the occasion.

It is proposed to publish by subscription a Set of Eighteen Organ Preludes and Fugues by the Rev. Sir F. A. Gore Ouseley, Bart. Subscribers' names will be received by the composer (St. Michael's College, Tenbury), or by the publishers, Messrs. Novello, Ewer and Co.

MR. MAPLESON merely announces that he will open Her Majesty's Theatre for his opera season on the 28th inst., reserving any details of the progress of his "Grand National" Lyrical establishment on the Thames Embankment, we presume, until the issue of his prospectus.

WE understand that the Alexandra Palace has been leased to Messrs. Bertram and Roberts, and will be reopened early in May.

AN International Exhibition, representing the historical development of music, is to take place at Bologna.

## REVIEWS.

*Paul et Virginie.* Opéra en Trois Actes et Six Tableaux. Poème de Jules Barbier et Michel Carré; Musique de Victor Massé. [Paris: Theodore Michaelis.]

THE important work before us, the latest composition of one who occupies an important and prominent position among living French composers, was produced for the first time on the 15th of November last at the Opéra National-Lyrique in Paris. M. Massé is no novice at operatic composition; in the "Dictionnaire Lyrique" of M. Clément no less than eighteen works from his pen are

enumerated. So far as we are aware, however, only two of these have made their way to this country, both of which, *Les Noces de Jeannette* and *Galathée*, were given by the French Opera company which visited London two years ago. These works, moreover, were written more than twenty years since; and it is not surprising to find that *Paul et Virginie* shows traces of the influence on the composer of more than one of his illustrious contemporaries. To this point we shall refer presently; but will first say a few words about the libretto.

The story of Paul and Virginia by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is probably so well known to our readers that any sketch of it would be superfluous. The subject is pastoral or idyllic, rather than dramatic, and would hardly appear at first sight well adapted for transformation into an opera. Yet this is by no means the first time that the experiment has been tried. French operas founded upon the same work were produced by Rodolphe Kreutzer in 1791, and by Lesueur in 1794; and there also exists an English *Paul and Virginia*, by W. Reeve and Mazzinghi. MM. Barbier and Carré, two of the most experienced librettists in France, among the best known specimens of whose workmanship are the textbooks to *Faust* and *Dinorah*, have adhered as closely as they could to the outline of the original tale, though certain modifications have been inevitable in adapting it to the stage. The most important of these is the greater prominence given to the episode of the fugitive negress for whom Virginia intercedes with her master, a rich planter, who receives in the drama the name of Sainte-Croix. This episode occupies a large portion of the first act. The second act is chiefly taken up with the events leading to the departure of Virginia for Europe; while the third act, which is considerably the shortest of the three, presents the return of Virginia, the shipwreck, and her death.

The question has of late been often discussed how far the example and procedure of Richard Wagner was likely to exert an influence on the future of dramatic music. It is not probable that many composers would write a "music-drama" (to use Wagner's own term) on the plan of *Tristan und Isolde*, or the *Ring des Nibelungen*; but it is impossible for any unprejudiced observer not to perceive that indirectly the innovations he has introduced have been most important in their effects. It is not only in recent German operas (such as Goetz's *Widerspänstigen Zählung* or Goldmark's *Königin von Saba*) that this is apparent; we see the Wagner influence even in Verdi's latest opera, *Aida*, and in the present work. This influence shows itself in the greater importance given to the connection of the music with the words, as well as in the care taken in the choice of a libretto. Formerly any verses were thought good enough to set to music, and many standard operas have weak, not to say absurd, libretti. Look, for instance, at Mozart's *Zauberflöte* or *Così fan tutte*, or at Weber's *Euryanthe*, the two latter of which may mainly thank their weak textbooks for the fact that they are almost banished from the stage. There is a growing tendency to attach more importance to this department of opera, and though, from its subject, we do not consider *Paul et Virginie* one of MM. Barbier and Carré's most successful libretti, it is yet far above the average of opera-books. But, further, the influence of Wagner appears in the music itself. The use of "Leitmotive"—leading themes, indicating situations or characters—which plays so important a part in Wagner's operas, is to some extent to be found in this work; while the orchestra is treated in the symphonic style rather than as a mere accompaniment to the voices. Moreover, though many detached numbers are to be met with in the work, we also find on the whole a closer connection between the different pieces than is mostly the case in operas not of recent date; while, lastly, the old-fashioned recitative (the so-called *recitativo secco*) is to a great extent discarded, the declamatory passages being in most cases accompanied by some characteristic design in the orchestra. All these points show progress of thought; they are all steps in the right direction; and in these respects M. Massé's latest opera contrasts favourably with such of his earlier works as have come under our notice.

It is very difficult by any mere verbal description to give a clear idea of any musical composition; nor would it be possible by any quotations in music-type short enough for insertion in these columns to do justice either to the ideas or to their treatment. Speaking in general terms, we should say that *Paul et Virginie* is an interesting production of a highly developed talent, rather than a work of positive genius. M. Massé possesses a genuine vein of melody; but, while free from plagiarisms, much of it produces the impression that something like it has been heard before, though we should be puzzled to say where. The music, too, is frequently very dramatic in feeling, and, so far as can be judged from reading the score, must, we should think, be very effective on the stage. It would take us too far to analyse separately each movement of the opera; and a bare catalogue of titles would be of little interest. It will suffice to refer to one or two of the more striking numbers. In the first act, the opening duet for the two mothers, Marguerite and Madame de la Tour, is very pretty, and characteristically French in its style; the chorus "Un navire entre dans le port," while familiar in its rhythm, produces a peculiar effect from the doubling of the soprano part by the instrumental basses two octaves lower throughout, while the other voices give full harmony, thus producing very curious "consecutive octaves." The duet between Paul and Virginia contains many charming passages, not unmixed with some commonplace cadences and embellishments. The whole finale of the first act is excellent.

The second act we consider on the whole the finest of the three. We may especially note the scene between Paul and his mother, in which the declamatory style of the music and the importance given to the accompaniments show perhaps more clearly than any other part of the work the influence of Wagner already referred to, and the great duet between Paul and Virginia, culminating in their mutual oath of fidelity, "Par le ciel qui m'entend," the theme of which has been already heard in the overture, and is met with again at the close of the opera. Virginia's air, "Bruits lointains," is a number written apparently as an opportunity of display for the *prima donna*; it is one of those pieces of florid vocalisation that may be found by dozens in Italian and French operas; and it seems like a concession made by the composer to public taste. In the third act we find but little that requires notice; the best number, we think, is Paul's air in which he reads Virginia's letter.

It is only needful to add in conclusion that from the reports of the musical critics the work appears to have met with very complete success; and it may, we think, be taken as a fairly representative work of the modern school of French opera.

*Hercules*. An Oratorio, composed in the year 1744, by George Frederick Handel. Edited, and the Pianoforte accompaniment revised from that of the German Handel Society, by Ebenezer Prout. [Novello, Ever & Co.]

Now that some of the lesser-known Oratorios of Handel are beginning to see the light, it may be hoped that "Hercules," the many beauties of which have been long revealed to those artistic treasure-hunters whose researches are uncontrolled by the fashion of the hour, will receive due recognition; for although some of the solos, and even choral pieces, are moulded too much according to the conventional pattern of the time, the work contains many numbers of surpassing grandeur, amongst which may be cited the chorus which closes the first Act, "Crown with festal pomp," the jubilant character of which would assuredly move the most apathetic audience to enthusiasm. It is well known that this Oratorio, or "Musical Drama," as it was announced in the *General Advertiser* of the 1st January, 1745, was relied upon, with "Belshazzar," which was composed just before it, to repair Handel's losses during the Lent of 1744, but the opposition of the nobility was too strong for him; and after frequently giving performances to almost empty houses, he was compelled to retire from the unequal contest. By means of the excellent Octavo Edition now issued, "Hercules" will no doubt