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Review

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WE understand that the Council of Trinity College, London, have lately decided to throw open its higher musical examinations to women. The first examination under the new statutes will take place early next year.

MR. MAPLESON announces a short series of performances of Italian Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre, to commence on the 5th inst. There is also a rumour that this will be succeeded by a season of Operas in English.

BACH's Cantata, "My spirit was in heaviness," will be sung with orchestral accompaniment at St. Anne's Church, Soho, every Friday evening during Advent.

ERRATUM.—In our *Special Correspondent's* notice of the *Leeds Festival*, last month, he was made to speak of the "dogmatic" character of Dr. Macfarren's new oratorio. For "dogmatic" read "dramatic."

REVIEWS.

Beethoven's Leben, von Ludwig Nohl. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1867-77. [Ernst Julius Günther.]

To write a genuine art-biography is no easy matter. It requires on the part of its author a variety of qualities such as are rarely to be met with combined in one person. He should possess, and that in a high degree, the special capacities of the historian, the psychologist, and the antiquarian, and, above all, he should be himself an artist born. In attempting to solve this problem, he should not content himself with introducing his hero to the reader, during different stages of his career, in a series, so to speak, of photographic portraits; but, by living his life over again, as it were, he should be able to reproduce it before our eyes in a progressive picture at once plastic and sympathetic. Hence writing biography is in itself an art, as yet young and imperfectly understood; and hence also the fact that out of a multitude of so-called biographies of great artists but few may be selected as being worthy of the name. Dealing as we are in the present instance with the life of the mightiest musical genius which the world has ever seen, we are entitled to measure the work of him who would make himself the interpreter of such a life by the highest standard of excellence, to expect him to be endowed with all those rare qualities which we have found to be essential to the art-biographer.

Nor does Herr Nohl enter upon his task with a light heart, or insensible to the responsibilities attaching to it, and we can sympathise with him when, after concluding the first volume of his work, the author finds himself almost overwhelmed by the magnitude of his undertaking and the profusion of material by which his eager research had been rewarded. He says in his preface to the second volume, "In spite of the by no means limited sphere of my investigations, and notwithstanding also the earnest labour of several years, I should not have had the courage to present my work, as completed, to the public, had I not gradually, through the work itself, gained the conviction that at the present moment it is as impossible to write a thoroughly exhaustive biography of the master as it is to form, as yet, a conclusive opinion upon his importance as an artist." There can be no doubt as to the correctness of this conclusion, and in this sense, then, we must regard the four good-sized volumes into which Herr Nohl has nevertheless contrived to expand his "Life of Beethoven." Herr Nohl's ability as a music-historian is too well known to require special acknowledgment on our part. He is untiring in his research, judicious in sifting his material, ingenious in his combinations. Moreover, his fertility as a writer is unmatched, even in much-writing Germany; and it is in this fact, we venture to think, that the weak points in his armour may be traced. His "Life of Mozart," which preceded the opening volume of the present biography by some years, although a congenial work with a distinctive merit of its own, came yet with something like an anti-climax closely upon the publication of the masterly biography of the same composer from the

pen of Otto Jahn. In the compilation of his "Beethoven" Herr Nohl had to encounter no such formidable rival. For, whatever may be the merits of such works on the life of the great master as those by Marx, Schindler, Lenz, Ullrich, and others, they are not to be compared, in comprehensiveness of design and original research, with the work now before us. The antagonist Herr Nohl ought to combat—and if he has tried to do so in this instance he has not succeeded—is a certain profuseness, or rather diffuseness, of style, which in a work of such intrinsic magnitude as the present ceases to be a mannerism and becomes a positive fault. Already in his "Mozart" this tendency to over-elaboration had been apparent; it has become considerably developed since in his "Beethoven." To quote but one example in illustration of our remarks. In the opening chapter of the book the author treats in twenty-one pages of the specific qualities of the Teutonic character, with especial regard to those tribes of the nation appertaining to the Lower Rhine (that part of the Fatherland where Beethoven was born), while on page 70 we arrive at an introduction to the great composer's more immediate ancestors. But, apart from this certainly somewhat unnecessarily lengthy introduction, the work suffers throughout by the author's constant aberrations from his theme in elaborate treatises on subjects which are but loosely connected with it, or in glowing descriptions of scenery, which may serve to attract the general reader, but which, in their volubility, only retard the literary development of a biography which, according to its author's own showing, it is as yet "impossible to exhaust." If we have one more fault to find, it is with a certain obtrusiveness of the author's individuality, as manifested in his æsthetic interpretation of the works of his hero, a characteristic which, however, he shares in common with a good many executive artists of the modern German school.

Having said so much in modification of our admiration of the laborious work which Herr Nohl has just completed, nothing but praise remains to be bestowed upon the great merits which otherwise it undoubtedly possesses. With an industry truly marvellous the author of "Beethoven's Leben" has collected the scattered materials to his biographical picture, and, by subjecting them to a criticism at once ingenious and exhaustive, has succeeded in correcting many erroneous views hitherto prevalent as to certain phases in the career of the great composer, in clearing up many doubtful points, and, finally, in adding a great deal which is entirely new and interesting. The limited space of our reviews does not permit us to enter in detail upon the contents of the volumes before us; nor would our readers be greatly assisted in forming an independent opinion on a work of such dimensions were we to offer a translation of some isolated extracts. We must confine ourselves to naming the headings of each of the four volumes into which the biography is divided. The first of these is entitled "Beethoven's Youth," and comprises the years 1770-1792, being subdivided into three books. In the second volume the author treats, again in three books, of "Beethoven's Manhood," which period is placed between the years 1793 and 1814. The third and fourth volumes really only form one, but are separately headed, namely—vol. iii., "The Last Twelve Years, 1815-1827," and vol. iiia. (oddly enough!), "The Last Twelve Years, 1823-1827" (*sic*). Interesting in the highest degree to the student, not only of Beethoven, but of art-history in general, are copious notes, references, and extracts, conveniently placed at the end of each volume by way of appendix, and which in themselves furnish the most conclusive evidence of the extent and thoroughness of Herr Nohl's preliminary research. The warm enthusiasm which the author displays in his analysis of the more important works of his hero, if it occasionally leads him to the employment of language somewhat hazy and mysterious, is nevertheless well calculated to impart to the mind of the reader a sense of the divine workings of genius; nor can we, after having perused it, lay the book aside without feeling that we have approached one step nearer in the sympathetic appreciation of the individuality of the great composer of whom it treats. If, nevertheless, we venture to question whether Herr Nohl's "Life of Beethoven" will

be added to the very limited number of standard biographies which the world possesses of its great men, our opinion only coincides with the author's own modest estimation of the relative possibilities of his work. Several generations to come must yet join hands with the present before we can span that mighty oak which has produced such branches as the Symphony in C minor and the "Ninth."

Grundlage und Aufgabe des allgemeinen Patronat-Vereins, &c. Von Hans von Wolzogen. [Chemnitz: E. Schmeitzner; London: F. Wohlaue.]

THE author of this pamphlet is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the cause of Herr Wagner, and of the "Society of Patrons" formed with the object of aiding the projected periodical performances at the National Theatre at Bayreuth. On some fifty pages Herr von Wolzogen gives an account of the reasons which have led to the formation of the Society in question, and points out its mission in the future. Those who take an interest in the progress of the Wagner movement in Germany ought to make themselves acquainted with the contents of this latest addition to the already voluminous Wagner literature, the net receipts of which will go to the general Bayreuth fund.

Novello's Music Primers. Edited by Dr. Stainer.
The Art of Pianoforte-playing. Ernst Pauer.
The Organ. John Stainer.
The Rudiments of Music. W. H. Cummings.
The Elements of the Beautiful in Music. Ernst Pauer.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE system of teaching music in all its branches has wonderfully improved within the last few years. Masters are no longer content to use manuals whose sole merit is that they cleverly avoid an explanation of difficulties; and, what is still better, pupils themselves demand a superior sort of lesson-book. Considering the immense number of pianoforte-tutors which already exist, it may be thought an entirely useless task to issue any more. But the merit of an educational work must be the test by which the necessity for its issue is to be determined. If it is absolutely without worth, the publisher as well as the author deserves blame for flooding the market with waste-paper. If, however, it shows great merit, no apology is needed for its publication, however large may be the array of its fore-runners. We do not think a better man could have been found to lay down the important first principles of pianoforte-playing than Ernst Pauer. As a skilful and brilliant performer he has long been recognised, and as a teacher it is generally admitted he has few, if any, rivals. It is evident from the first to the last page of the primer before us that the work contains the results of long experience and much thought, stated in concise and pleasant language. Higher praise than this it would be difficult to bestow. The arrangement of the matter is excellent. The pupil is told how to sit at the instrument, how to hold his hands, and *why* they should be so held. Then the process of *touch* is ingeniously analysed, and exercises are given both in the *legato* and *staccato* style. The chapter on technical execution is divided into the following heads: Scales, Shakes, Chords, Tremolo passages, Double notes, Octaves. An ample supply of exercises is given under each head. The scales, both major and minor, are given in octaves, thirds, sixths, and tenths. We were specially pleased to find the more modern form of the minor scales (that is, with the augmented second between the sixth and seventh, both in ascending and descending) written out in full and fingered (p. 30). If we mistake not, this will be a special boon to a large number of students. The exercises on the shake are admirable, and are interspersed with the most useful advice and hints. The subject of chords is subdivided into "firm chords" and "arpeggio chords," and illustrated by some half-dozen pages of apt quotations from the works of classical writers. After a few remarks on part-playing, ornaments and graces are exhaustively explained (pp. 61 and 69). The thoughtful advice given on the use of the pedals (p. 63) will be most

valuable alike to teachers and pupils; the same may safely be said of the capital exposition of the true principles of fingering given on pp. 64 and 65. Among the hints on practising (p. 66) are many which we are tempted to quote, but where so much is well said on such a variety of useful and interesting subjects, as for example on "ordinary faults in a performance," "reading at sight," "classification of composers, their styles and schools," &c., we can only recommend our readers to spare our space by looking into the work for themselves. As an appendix, a delightful sketch of the history of the pianoforte is given, and also a copious vocabulary of musical terms. Probably the page devoted to "the order in which the sonatas of our classical masters should be studied" (p. 73), will be found one of the most useful sources of information in the primer. On the whole, we have seldom seen a more useful or cheaper work. It is capably printed, and though large enough to stand on an ordinary pianoforte-desk, it is by no means cumbersome when held in the hand as a textbook for classes.

Dr. Stainer's Organ Primer is not only elementary, but contains information and advice which, if properly carried out, will greatly assist the student to become, if his natural abilities will allow, a performer of sound taste and of the highest mechanical excellence. Of course, it is to be expected that Dr. Stainer would direct his students towards the highest standard, and the following extracts from the preface will show the line on which the work is based: "There are two ways in which time may be devoted to the practice of a musical instrument. The first and most common is to avoid the difficulties which present themselves, and to be content with mastering just so much of the art of playing as will afford a little amusement; the other is to face at once the special difficulties of the instrument and persevere until they are surmounted. By the former a player cannot possibly rise above a very mediocre standard, and his performance will never receive higher praise than that of being called tolerable; but by the latter the highest excellence will be within reach, and the student will only be limited in its attainment by the amount of natural talents with which he may be endowed." We think Dr. Stainer may be credited at the outset with originality in his short sketch of the history of the organ. The first paragraph contains the pith of many subsequent pages, and deserves quotation. "The history of the organ is nothing more than a narrative of the efforts made by men to bring under the control of one performer a large number of instruments called flutes." The author then gives a number of interesting sketches from ancient sources, especially on page 11, where two organists who are playing on one instrument are looking reproachfully at the four blowers, who are actively engaged, and probably producing a very uneven supply of wind for the organ. We will pass over the pages which are taken up with the construction of the instrument and the history of many valuable improvements made in organ-building, but we have no doubt this part will be read with care and profit by many who, though good performers, have seen but little of the internal working of their instrument. A most useful chapter too is the one explaining the nature and peculiarities of the different stops and their proper combinations; also on the use and abuse of the swell pedal. But space will not permit us to dwell on this part of the work. Now for the practical part. Dr. Stainer expects his students to have a fair knowledge of the groundwork of piano-playing at the outset, and most teachers will see the advantage of this, for never has this fact been more necessary than at the present time, when so much music of the pianoforte character is played on the organ. Since the invention of the pneumatic valve the keys of the organ can be made as light as those of a pianoforte, and therefore it can no longer be urged that it is injurious to a pianist to practise on the organ. Indeed, it is quite the reverse; really fine piano-playing is now nearly identical with that of organ-playing. Now follows the method of *striking* the pedals, illustrated by instructive, though not too artistic, engravings, which show the student clearly how to obtain a good pedal "touch," and also a useful method for finding the required note, of course without looking for it. One of the most