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Toccata. For the Pianoforte by Cotsford Dick

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of the remains of Wickliffe—which were exhumed, burnt to ashes, and cast into a neighbouring brook—from the Avon to the Severn, and thence into the sea: “and thus,” says Fuller in his “Church History,” “the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.” The music of this song is melodious, and well expresses the words. The voice parts are written with the ease which might be expected from so practised a hand as that of Miss Macirone, and the harmony is most appropriate throughout. The composition will certainly prove effective if intrusted to a well-trained choir.

Birds and Flowers for Little Folks. The words by the Editor of “Birds and Flowers.” Set to music by Albert Hirschfeld. [F. Pitman.]

As some very prominent advertisements, displayed in framework, precede the words and music of this book, we conclude that we have rightly guessed the name of its publisher; but the rather important announcement of this fact is entirely omitted from the title-page. The work is most elegantly got up, both the external and internal appearance, indeed, being extremely attractive to the eye. We cannot, however, say that we warmly sympathise either with the verses or the music. The “shiny black-beetle,” who escapes being made a meal of by the birds, “to be eaten at some future date,” is scarcely a delicate subject for juvenile vocalists to linger over; and when the “poor, poor birdies” in the snow, with a pleading voice, to the children say “give us a worm, if you have such a thing,” we cannot help thinking (perhaps with some respect for Darwin’s recent work) that it may become a question which of the two should be sacrificed. The music wedded to the poetry is simple enough, and generally tuneful; but we do not like some few things in the accompaniments; as, for example, where melody and bass rise in octaves from dominant to key-note (between bars 15 and 16 in “The Beetle and the Birds”), the awkward chord, with the doubled leading-note (bar 11, in “The Sparrow”), and the octaves C, B, in the accompaniment (bar 7 in “The Skylark”), with some other minor defects which could be easily remedied.

Twenty Songs for a Contralto Voice. With Pianoforte Accompaniment. Composed by Franz Schubert. Selected, edited, and translated by Natalia Macfarren. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

WE lately drew attention to the publication in this edition of “Twenty Songs for a Mezzo-Soprano Voice by Schubert”; and we have now the same number for a Contralto, amongst which those acquainted with the vocal works of this composer will know that there are some of the most beautiful he ever wrote. The volume commences with the popular “Wanderer,” which needs no commendation from us; but we may say that there is a peculiar charm in some of the lesser-known songs in this selection which, as we have hinted in our notice of the first volume, can only be fully revealed to the listener through the union of two equally sympathetic artists, the pianoforte and voice being in truth indissolubly woven together in every composition. If we cite “The Old Man’s Song,” “The Flight of Time,” “The Weary Heart,” “Sadness,” “To the Lyre,” “The Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman,” “Death and the Maiden,” and “Prometheus,” as amongst the most attractive in the book, it is only that in passing through them these few have especially struck us. There may be individual opinions, of course, upon the relative merits of the songs; but all will agree that the volume is a priceless treasure to contralto vocalists.

The Pianoforte Teacher’s Guide. By L. Plaidy. Translated by Fanny Raymond Ritter. [W. Reeves.]

THE name of the author of this book is too well known to need a word of introduction. His “Technical Studies” are now happily almost as familiar to pianists in this country as in Germany; and we therefore cordially welcome the work just published, which cannot but prove highly valuable both to pupils and teachers. In proof of Plaidy’s estimate of the real mission of his art, we may cite the following preliminary passage in the “Guide” before us: “It is especially requisite that the teacher

should consider his vocation a sacred one, an elevated life task, lest his pupil should regard it as a something of little consequence—mere amusement.” Certainly this great master of the technics of his instrument has provided ample material for the solid method of study which he recommends; and we feel convinced that if his practical exercises are taught according to the suggestions laid down in this book, the sound progress of the pupil is ensured.

Toccata. For the Pianoforte. By Cotsford Dick. [Enoch and Sons.]

MR. COTSFORD DICK is rather fond of reflecting the style of the old masters in his pianoforte music; and having written a carefully considered sketch where both hands are well employed, he has selected the somewhat antiquated word “Toccata”—which certainly does not express anything in particular—as a title, instead of the modern and more definite prefixes to which we are becoming accustomed. We are in the habit of associating the term “Toccata” with something of greater importance than the composer has here given us—most writers having used this name for works which illustrate some particular touch—but the themes, in A major and minor, are melodious, and the character of the piece is well and effectively preserved throughout.

Danse Antique. For the Piano. Composed by F. Williams. [C. Jefferys.]

MODERN antiques are now so prevalent in our architecture, our dress, and even in the furniture of our rooms, that the custom of “looking back” in our music is scarcely to be wondered at. It is true that by those thoroughly acquainted with the works of a past time compositions moulded upon these forms cannot but be regarded as imitations, however clever they may be; and before recommending such new productions to pianists, therefore, it would be well to ascertain whether they are well acquainted with the old ones. Mr. Williams’s piece is a fair reminiscence of the days of our grandfathers, and will certainly please an audience not too exacting. It is stated that it has been “performed with the greatest success at the Brighton Aquarium.”

O Maiden fairest. Serenade. Words and Music by Frederick H. Bell. [B. Williams.]

COMPOSERS, like authors, suffer from so many good works having been produced before their time; and it has often been remarked by despairing writers that Shakespeare and Beethoven have really left nothing for anybody to say after them. Mr. Bell is evidently one of these victims, for he would have written a very good Serenade had not M. Gounod written a “Sérénade Berceuse” before him. We do not say that he has reproduced the notes of the popular French composer, but the figure in the pianoforte part which colours the composition throughout made us actually believe that we were commencing Gounod’s Sérénade. It may be said, however, that the effect of this resemblance—which is very probably accidental—is lessened by the change of time and key in the middle of the song.

Song of the Norns. English Version, by Lewis Novra. Composed for Female Voices, Solo and Chorus, and Orchestra, by H. Hofmann. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS characteristic composition has hitherto only appeared in folio size, and we need scarcely say that its publication in Novello’s Octavo Edition will largely spread a knowledge of its many claims to attention. Being written for female voices, it appeals not only to choral societies but to drawing-room vocalists, who will doubtless be glad to become acquainted with a work so full of beauty and yet so thoroughly within their executive powers. The pianoforte accompaniment is exceedingly well arranged, and the numerous indications of the instrumental score will be found useful as guides to the performer.

Minuet Sentimentale. For Pianoforte. By Frederick F. Rogers. [W. Morley, Jun., and Co.]

ALTHOUGH we can hardly discover any justification of its title, this Minuet is in every respect an excellent piece of music, melodious, artistic, and containing all the elements