Review

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which, from time to time, break in upon them. The *fête* music in the next tableau need not long detain us. M. Massenet, an adept in dealing with situations of the kind, is here bright, animated, and vigorous to the last degree. The ballet movements are quite charming, and will often be heard apart from the opera for the sake of their attractive Spanish character. Following the entrance of *Chimène* and her demand for justice comes a most imposing *ensemble*, wrought up to the highest expression of conflicting passions. M. Massenet deals with it in a manner characteristically French—that is to say, with great breadth and force of outline, rather than variety of detail. But the effect cannot be denied, any more than the steadiness with which it is maintained through the whole of the *Finale* which sees *Don Rodrigue* appointed leader of the army. Upon the whole of this Act, indeed, M. Massenet may be complimented. It is a great effort of its kind, and a successful one.

A marked contrast comes with the opening of Act III., and *Chimène's* despairing monologue. Touching melody abounds here, and the true notes of varied feeling are continually heard, as, also, in the important duet which follows for the heroine and her lover. Upon this duet, with its deep emotion and pathetic beauty, the memory of those who have heard it loves to dwell. In some respects it is the finest thing in the work, and bears comparison with the most famous examples of its kind, not excepting the equally long and passionate one in the fourth Act of "*Les Huguenots*." M. Massenet, always easily picturesque, is happy in the camp scene with its Moorish dances, and charmingly effective in that of the Vision, where his melodic power asserts itself to good purpose.

In the last Act we have the highly contrasted duet of *Chimène* and *Don Diègue*, each sorrowing for the supposed dead hero, and the joyous pageant music which welcomes the conqueror, and expresses all the feeling of a happy *dénouement*. Upon this we need not dwell further than to say that the opera sustains its musical interest to the end. A true climax is reached as *Chimène* is called upon publicly to say whether she accepts *Rodrigue*, although the slayer of her father. An exciting situation, cleverly treated, thus precedes the final descent of the curtain.

We have noticed the opera in merest outline, not caring to anticipate the careful review it must receive after its English performance. Our object has been to excite interest in, and expectation of, a remarkable work.

Novello, Ewer and Co.'s Music Primers. Edited by Dr. Stainer. *Solfeggi.* By Florence A. Marshall.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

In order to place our readers in possession of the real intention of the authoress in producing this work, we cannot do better than quote from her ably written Preface the following remarks upon the character of the Seventy *Solfeggi* presented in the furtherance of her plan. "Although composed for a sight-singing class, they are not, themselves, intended to teach sight-singing. Although illustrating various technical facts in music, they do not profess to instil any of these, except indirectly. Although affording practice to the vocal powers similar in kind, if not in degree, to that of ordinary *Solfeggi* for solo singers, they are not essentially exercises in vocalisation. I would have them bear the same relation to technical sight-singing that a country walk does to an object-lesson. They are little music-pictures, adapted for the voice or for voices; recreation-exercises for all the musical powers, uttered in song." In connection with this explanation of the *Solfeggi*, should also be read the Chapter—Essay indeed, it might be called—upon the "Moveable Do, and Tonic Sol-fa," the opinions therein expressed amply justifying the use of Sol-fa syllables, which are placed under each note of the *Solfeggi*, although the ordinary notation on the five-line staff is adhered to. Some useful hints, too, may be taken to heart by musical reformers in the remarks upon the method of using the *Solfeggi*. For instance, the authoress tells us—"Whenever the key changes, the name of the new key is given in the Staff Notation, as of course it always is in Sol-fa. I do not know why this should not be commonly done in elementary music, or in single vocal or instrumental parts. It would be a great help to clearness and swiftness of comprehension." Undoubtedly it would;

but the conservative feeling which rules our present notation, and which the Tonic Sol-faists are attempting to battle with, would speedily frustrate any attempt in this direction—even the old verbal indications of whether the key is major or minor being now abolished, by common consent. Bearing in mind the avowed design of the composer in writing the *Solfeggi* contained in this volume, we have nothing but unqualified praise for them, not only as Exercises for class-singers, but as refined and graceful little Sketches thoroughly worthy of being sung to words instead of syllables: indeed in such charmingly melodious pieces as "A Song of yesterday," "Evening Song," "Forest Echoes," and the "Siciliana," little vocalists will find it difficult to avoid supplying some (perhaps nursery) lines to the highly suggestive notes they are singing. We may say that, apart from their intrinsic attraction as musical pieces, many are specially illustrative of intervals—as, for instance, seconds, thirds, fourths, the diminished fifth, and augmented fourth; others of chords, as the common chord, dominant seventh, and diminished seventh; and many of a distinct class of composition, as the Waltz, Minuet, Polacca, Galop, and Canon. Some are unaccompanied, and others have a simple pianoforte part, always appropriate, and always easy to play. That the work must become extensively known is beyond a doubt; and when we affirm as we do with the utmost confidence, that Mrs. Marshall has done for young vocalists what Schumann has so successfully effected for young pianists, there is equal certainty that it will become as extensively appreciated.

Die Viola alta oder Altgeige. Von Hermann Ritter. Dritte vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage.
[Leipzig: Carl Merseburger.]

THE object which the author of this *brochure* has at heart is the regeneration of the viola or, as this instrument is still somewhat misleadingly called in this country, the tenor (French, *l'alto*; Italian, *viola di Braccio*). When, to adopt the language of modern physiology, the great "struggle for existence" took place during the first half of the past century, amongst the instruments of most various calibre and capacity belonging to the violin family, the question was eventually set at rest by the definite institution, during Haydn's earlier time, of the present orchestral string quartet. The component parts of the latter in its fundamental dimensions—viz., violin, viola, violoncello, and violono, or Double-Bass, were selected as corresponding most nearly to the main divisions of the human voice, and this principle of analogy was likewise extended to the remaining groups of instruments constituting the modern orchestral body. Now it is Herr Ritter's contention that the law governing the "survival of the fittest" has been at fault as regards the selection of the instrument intended (as he maintains, and we think rightly) to represent the contralto voice among its stringed associates—i.e., the viola; or, at any rate, that the instrument bearing that name has greatly degenerated since the time of its permanent adoption in modern instrumental combinations. "Its veiled and dull tone, together with a certain 'nasal' timbre," the author contends, "albeit dear to some of its advocates, render the existing viola an unworthy representative of its vocal prototype, the characteristic qualities of which are rich mellowness, sonority and flexibility." Thus it has no claim to the occasional distinction of a solo instrument, nor does it consequently offer much encouragement for its special study, it being a notorious fact that most of its professors in our orchestras are taken from the ranks of second and third rate violin players, to the detriment of the few characteristic qualities which may be said to distinguish the instrument in question. These and other considerations, put forward with much clearness and logical force in the above pamphlet, have occupied the attention of Herr Ritter for a long time past, and have led to the construction some years ago, under his supervision, of a viola with which his name has since become associated, and which, from its superior claims to represent among stringed instruments the human contralto, he calls the "*viola alta*." This instrument, although tuned the same as the one it is intended to replace (i.e., a major fifth below the violin) is more powerfully constructed, Herr Ritter having been guided in his task by the ingenious "*Geometrical Rules for Violin makers*" laid down in 1786 by Antonio