Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 40, No. 673 (Mar. 1, 1899), p. 186

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3365749>

Accessed: 02-11-2015 06:35 UTC

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Novello's School Music. Old May-Day. Cantata for Female Voices. Words written by Shapcott Wensley. Music composed by F. Cunningham Woods.

May-Day Revels. Words written by Hettie M. Hawkins. Music composed by John E. West.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

"OLD May-Day" is designed to awaken some of the echoes of bygone days. . . . In "Old May-Day" we get the young men and maidens bringing in the branches of may at the dawn; the milkmaids with their shining pails; the May bells; the dance round the May-pole; the Morris dancers with Maid Marion; the 'clean sweeps'; the hobby-horses; Jack-in-the-green, and many of the features of the May-day in olden times." So runs the preface to one of the best of this excellent series of school music. The spirit of spring seems to have inspired Mr. Wensley's poetical lines, and they have been wedded by Mr. Woods to music happily suggestive of jocund mirth, which in bygone times was wont to reign "in the merry month of May." No small share of Mr. Woods' success is attributable to his having cast his music in old English dance forms. The sprightly overture is in the style of a jig. Its tripping melody is subsequently made to serve as the accompaniment to the vocal portion of the gay and jovial May-pole dance, which effectively concludes the cantata. Into this number Byrd's Sellenger's round is also cleverly interwoven. There are only four other vocal numbers, in all of which the chorus is called upon. The first two movements are entirely for chorus, written in two parts, one in 6-8 time of graceful character and the other in *Tempo di menuetto*. In the remaining numbers the chorus takes up the refrain of the soprano soloist, who is furnished with some very pleasing and melodious music of a simple but effective nature.

"May-Day Revels" is a cantata intended for dramatic representation and the work is laid out on a more extended scale than that by Mr. Woods. It opens with a short but lively instrumental introduction to which the villagers enter dancing. When they are all assembled they break forth into a graceful two-part song in waltz measure. This is succeeded by a chorus of girls, who sing a "Children's 'Ladye' song," which should prove one of the most pleasing features of the entertainment. The villagers return and execute the May-pole dance, for which Mr. West has written some music in perfect accord with the style of the old English dances on such occasions, and for the dancing of which full directions are given. The next number is a rhythmic march to accompany the entrance of the *May Queen*, who is greeted by a melodious chorus written in two parts. The subsequent appearance of *Robin Hood* and *Maid Marion* is followed by an effective ballad for the knight of the forest, and this is succeeded by a milkmaid's song and dance, the entrance to appropriate music of the hobby-horse, and a pleasing waltz to accompany the archery contest. The dance round the May-pole is subsequently resumed, the chimes give out the discreet hour of six p.m., and the villagers conclude the festivities in a loyal fashion by singing "God save the Queen." With gay dressing, a little ingenious stage management, and appropriate "business" a good deal might be made of this well designed work, which, moreover, could be most effectively performed out of doors "under the greenwood tree."

Four Pianoforte Sketches. By Alicia Adélaïde Needham. *Far from my Heavenly Home.* Sacred song for a medium voice. Words by Henry Francis Lyte. The music composed by Alicia Adélaïde Needham.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

MRS. NEEDHAM'S four pianoforte sketches are very pleasing and playable little pieces. The first, entitled "Moods," might perhaps have been more happily called "whims," for the moods with which the music deals are decidedly whimsical. But doubtless this effect arises from the fact that ladies' moods are often whims in disguise, and whatever it was that Mrs. Needham sought to express it was worth saying, and has been said with grace and neatness. The second number bears the descriptive title of "An old spinning wheel," and to an accompaniment in triplets it sings an expressive song, into

which much meaning might be put by a sympathetic pianist. The third sketch is called "Frolics," and the music is delightfully light-hearted and gay, and although sometimes insistent in expression the frolicsomeness is always decorous, even possessing a measure of grace. The series is concluded by "Fancies," "bright-eyed" in character and vivacious—a little inclined to run wild, perhaps, "as is their nature to." The movement makes more demand on digital dexterity than what has gone before; but there will be "pleasure in the learning," and, it may be added, in the listening—provided the "learning" is what it should be.

The setting of the well-known hymn "Far from my heavenly home" is of a kind that has met with much acceptance, and so presumably it supplies a want. In this style of sacred song the chief requirement would seem to be the provision of singable phrases, with an accompaniment that can be read at sight by a pianist of average abilities. Both these conditions are found in Mrs. Needham's song, combined with a measurable amount of artistic skill in construction and workmanship.

The growth and influence of Music in relation to civilization. By H. Tipper. [Elliott Stock.]

It stands to reason that a writer who attempts to set forth the growth and development of music from the earliest times to Beethoven in 200 octavo pages has attempted a task that is well nigh impossible. But the aim of the author has been to consider his subject "chiefly in relation to the moral influence it has exerted, and the ideal forces of which it is the exponent." Within these limitations Mr. Tipper has produced a book which may be read with interest and profit. His aim has been to "leave an impression of the majesty and permanence of ideal forces which the tendency of the time has unwittingly done much to obscure." The development of the art in England has not been treated of in the present volume, as the subject has been reserved for separate treatment. The book would make an appropriate present to a lover of music.

Music: how it came to be what it is. By Hannah Smith. [John Murray.]

THE authoress of this attractive and interestingly written book modestly states that it is "founded upon various courses of lectures which the writer has given before audiences of students and amateurs." Her desire has been to "aid any lovers of good music toward a more intelligent hearing—which is sure to bring an increased love of the art." Miss Smith, who is, we believe, an American lady, has admirably succeeded in carrying out her intention and she has produced a book of educational value, yet free from that pedantic style which so often repels the general reader. The divisions of the work are excellent, and the information supplied is quite encyclopædic in its way. The book is admirably got up and, moreover, the many illustrations greatly add to its value, the nine plates at the end of old clavier instruments being of special interest. It is just the book to put into the hands of young students to stimulate in them a love of the art of music.

Bonnie Jeannie Gordon. Song. Words by Arthur King. Music by A. C. Mackenzie.

Eily. Song. Words by G. Hubi Newcombe. Music by Stewart Macpherson.

[Joseph Williams.]

"BONNIE Jeannie Gordon" is a vivacious song which tells how this patriotic maiden secured a thousand recruits for her country's need by promising each a kiss and a guinea. The story is told in four verses, each of which is followed by a refrain which might well be taken in chorus by faithful clansmen. Sir Alexander's setting is of course in ballad form, and the music is as true to the spirit of the text as Bonnie Jeannie was to her clan, and that the Southron may fully comprehend Jeannie's patriotism an English translation is given of the Scotch text.

In "Eily," tenor vocalists will find a simple but tender and passionate love song, extremely melodious and grateful to sing. What tenor could wish for more?