Review

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At the recent higher examinations held at Trinity College, London, Elizabeth Firth gained the position of associate pianist, and Francis Victor Lewis was awarded honours in harmony. Both are pupils of Mr. James J. Monk, Liverpool.

A CHORAL Competition and Tonic Sol-Fa Festival is announced to take place at the Crystal Palace on Saturday, June 5, the adjudicators being Dr. Bridge, Messrs. Joseph Barnby and Ebenezer Prout.

REVIEWS.

Handbook of Musical Biography. For the use of General Readers and Schools. By C. A. Caspar and E. M. Patmore. [George Bell and Sons.]

HAD we met with such positive misstatements and extraordinary remarks upon the genius of composers as Messrs. Caspar and Patmore have gathered together anywhere but in a "Handbook" for the use of students, we should unquestionably have placed them amongst our "Curiosities of Musical Criticism." But so pretentious a work demands a notice in our reviewing columns; and although we find it difficult to treat the book seriously, therefore, we will do the best to place our readers in possession of the nature of its contents. Divided into several sections, the composers—or at least those whom the authors consider worthy of the honour—representing the various schools are dismissed usually with a few lines; some, however, such as Handel, Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, &c., having two or three pages devoted to a notice of their career. As a specimen of the shorter biographies, we may mention that of Tallis, who was, we are told, "a great favourite at the Court of Queen Elizabeth," and "the composer of the 'Evening Hymn.'" The more lengthy ones are replete with original remarks, the most extraordinary of which perhaps are upon the modern German writers; the compositions of Wagner, we are informed, being "all of them more or less clever reminiscences of Gluck and Weber, with a despised Meyerbeer's noisy instrumentation." Raff has only about three lines and a half, recording the fact that he was "an eccentric writer in the style of Schumann." But the various errors scattered throughout the work surprise us more than the absurd criticisms upon the styles of the composers, because any of the numerous books which are said to have been consulted could at least have set the authors right as to facts. Handel, for example, is said to have written "The Beggars' Opera"; Wagner to have died in 1884; Counterpoint to be "the art of composing fugues"; Cipriani Potter to have been a pupil of Mozart (although Mozart was dead before Potter was born); Weber to have died at the house of "Sir Henry Smart"; and John Barnett to have taken lessons of Dr. Samuel Arnold, the truth being that Dr. Arnold died in the year that Barnett was born. "History," it is often remarked, "repeats itself." Let us hope that such "history" as we are here furnished with may falsify the proverb.

Novello, Ewer and Co.'s Music Primers. Organ Accompaniment of the Choral Service. By J. F. Bridge, Mus. Doc. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

NOTWITHSTANDING its late appearance, we are inclined to think this little treatise will prove as useful and popular as any of Messrs. Novello's Primers. At first sight it might seem that Dr. Bridge's task was uncalled for, since any one who has practical knowledge of the organ should *ipso facto* be able to accompany at least an ordinary service. But that such is not the case will be within the experience of all who attend church or chapel. It is by no means a rarity to hear a good performance of a Fugue of Bach, or a Sonata of Mendelssohn, and a wretched and inartistic accompaniment by the same player, who may be intent upon displaying his technical skill rather than supporting the choir and congregation by judicious use of his instrument. It is not, however, to those who know the way and do it not that Dr. Bridge chiefly addresses himself, but to those who, while still in a state of pupillage, are called upon to fulfil active duties, and therefore need counsel and suggestion as to the performance of the same. We have no hesitation in saying that to such this Primer will prove extremely

valuable. The instructions for the proper "filling in" of the harmonies, for example, are excellent, and if obeyed would save those among a congregation who happen to possess refined musical tastes, the pain caused by hearing terrible progressions of consecutive fifths, awkward leaps in the pedals, perpetual pumping of the swell pedal, and other amateurish imperfections. We had marked several passages for quotation, but we think enough has been said to recommend the work, and, without necessarily expressing agreement with everything laid down, we venture to assert that the young organist who takes Dr. Bridge as an infallible guide, and obeys his directions implicitly, will not go far astray.

Come, all ye Nymphs and Shepherds gay. Part-song. Words by Wioni. Composed by W. G. Alcock, F.C.O. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS Part-song, dedicated to the members of the Twickenham Choral Society, is effectively written for the voices; and, although somewhat unduly lengthened, may be conscientiously recommended to all who appreciate refined and unpretentious music. The pianoforte part is an important portion of the composition, but presents no difficulty even to an average performer. The phrase commencing "And listen how the carols flow," with its graceful accompaniment, is an excellent point.

Stars of the Summer night. Serenade. Words by Longfellow.

Flow down, cold rivulet. Song. Words by Lord Tennyson. Composed by J. H. Walker. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

ANY composer who chooses for musical colouring such well-known poems as the above, must inevitably bring his work into comparison with that of some of the most celebrated artists of the time; yet with a full knowledge of the songs to the same verses which have preceded those now before us, we conscientiously give high praise to the graceful and musicianlike settings of Mr. Walker. Of the two, we prefer, perhaps, the first on our list; but both are melodious, vocal, and well harmonised; although we are inclined to think that in each song it would have been better if the triplets in the pianoforte accompaniment had been occasionally broken. We may say that the frequent changes of key are in every case most effective, and in happy sympathy with the poetry.

Music Study in Germany. From the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay. [Macmillan and Co., 1886.]

MISS FAY'S pleasant and enthusiastic descriptions of her life and "Music study" in Germany, in her home letters to her family, bear the stamp of American keenness of perception, allied to an almost childish freshness and artistic charm. Her criticisms of the individualities and performances of the great artists of the day, in all branches of music, are clever, original, and spirited. The style is clear and easy, never deviating from the open, unaffected simplicity of a girl anxious to give her honest impressions of a new life and country to her family in her letters, and it never even borders upon pedantry. Her letters also display her earnest and single-minded pursuit of her art, in the face of difficulties and loneliness. Through them, too, comes many a breath of her extremely good business capacity and truly American faculty of attracting notice and making friends. The book also contains much valuable information concerning conservatoires and the different methods and "schools" of pianoforte playing in Germany. The main interest in the book lies, however, in Miss Fay's interesting and graphic descriptions of the individualities and surroundings of the great musicians with whom she came into contact—"names familiar in our mouths as household words"—and with the owners of which but a small portion of her readers have any chance of becoming acquainted in their daily life and work. Tausig, Kullak, the Wiecks, and Clara Schumann, Deppe, the Abbé Liszt, and the like stand out (to quote her own refreshing simile), with all the distinctness of a stereoscopic picture. And if her expressions are sometimes slightly over tinged with roseate light and a somewhat exaggerated admiration and "gush," we can only say with Cherbuliez: *Pour admirer assez, il faut admirer trop et un peu*