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Oh, Soft Was the Song. Was It Some Golden Star. Twilight. A Child Asleep. The Torch by Edward Elgar

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- Mr. T. J. Crawford, St. Katharine Cree Church, E.C.—Agitato (D minor Sonata), *Rheinberger*.
 Mr. Alfred R. Stock, Congregational Church, Markham Square, S.W.—Allegro in E flat, *Arthur H. Brown*.
 Dr. M. J. Monk, Truro Cathedral—Marche funèbre, *Tchaikovsky*.
 Mr. W. Deane, St. Mary's Church, Johannesburg—Marche solennelle, *E. H. Lemare*.
 Dr. A. L. Peace, St. George's Hall, Liverpool—Sonata in C minor, *Julius Reubke*.
 Mr. H. J. Baker, Parish Church, Newark—Festival March in B flat, *Sinclair*.
 Mr. Henry Riding, Chigwell Church—Introduction, Air and Variations, *W. G. Wood*.
 Mr. E. H. Lemare, New Auditorium, Atlanta, Georgia—Sonata No. 6, *Mendelssohn*.
 Mr. Leonard Brown, Wesley Church, Leicester—March on a Theme of *Handel*.
 Dr. Prendergast, Winchester Cathedral—Triumphal Song in E flat, *A. H. Brewer*.
 Mr. Fred W. Brock, St. James's Church, St. James's Road, S.E.—March in G, *H. Smart*.
 Mr. T. Burgess Lane, St. George's Church, Darwen—Overture in D major, *J. Kinross*.
 Mr. T. Westlake Morgan, St. Katharine Cree Church, E.C.—Sonata in A minor, *Rheinberger*.

ORGANIST AND CHOIRMASTER AND CHOIR APPOINTMENTS.

- Mr. G. F. Austen, organist and choirmaster of All Saints' Cathedral, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
 Mr. E. Burritt Lane, organist and choirmaster of Steyning Parish Church, Sussex.
 Mr. James T. Pye, organist and choirmaster of St. Aidan's New Cleve, Grimsby.
 Mr. John Tobin, organist and choirmaster of All Saints', Oxtou, Birkenhead.
 Mr. J. Whyte, organist and choirmaster of South United Free Church, Fraserburgh.
 Mr. S. W. Hase, vicar-choral, Lichfield Cathedral.
 Mr. George Weedon, bass-baritone, St. Bartholomew-the-Great, E.C.

Reviews.

Oh, soft was the song. Was it some golden star. Twilight. A child asleep. The torch. By Edward Elgar.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

The words of the first three of the above songs, which form the first instalment of a cycle of six songs, are by Gilbert Parker. They are of no ordinary character, and seem to demand a musical outlook such as that of Sir Edward Elgar for their adequate treatment. 'Oh, soft was the song' is based upon a short phrase of haunting beauty that recurs often. 'Was it some golden star' turns upon a former existence—'Once in another land, Ages ago, You were a queen, and I loved you so.' The music is built chiefly upon one theme, announced to these words by the unaccompanied voice, variety being lent by the later accompaniments. 'Twilight' is instinct with solemnity and mystery. The musical setting has the unmistakable characteristics of Elgar's most thoughtful style, and in the hands of a singer of true understanding, must always produce a deep impression. With his great individuality, Elgar achieves some uncommon feature of merit in all his present-day music. In the case of these songs he arrives at significant meaning while expressing himself only in the simplest terms; in this respect his settings resemble the poems. It need hardly be said that the phrasing and accentuation of the vocal part are regulated in accordance with natural delivery of the words.

The same general remarks apply to 'A child asleep' and 'The torch.' The former 'is made to Anthony Goetz (*Æ. 1*) for his mother's singing.' The poem is by Elizabeth Barrett Browning; the music a soothing and singable melody.

The words of 'The torch' are an Eastern-European folksong, paraphrased by Pietro d'Alba, and call for the vigour and striking rhythm of Sir Edward Elgar's setting. The last-mentioned song is published in three keys; the four preceding are arranged only for low or medium voices.

The Auxiliary Hymn-tune Book. Compiled, arranged and edited by W. H. MacDermott and N. W. Howard-McLean.

[The Vincent Music Co., Ltd.]

This is an endeavour to supply a want felt by those wishing for a change in the musical settings of hymns, and though in so many cases the tunes already set to well-known words are hardly likely to be displaced, it is to be feared that long use and association have blinded many people to the undoubted weakness of some of those tunes. Though we cannot say we are entirely in sympathy with all the examples in the book, there are many which appeal to us as combining a popular style with good musicianship. Among those which please us, we would mention Nos. 132 and 263.

The chief weakness of many tunes is the alto part, which is often a monotonous 'filling-in,' and some contributors have fallen into this error. Do composers think or extemporise in the early stages of their tunes? If the latter, we suspect the thumb of the right hand, which too often acts as a pivot from which to extend the other digits!

The compilation of such a book as this is no light task, but the large number of good tunes it contains will, we hope, bring reward to those responsible for its publication.

Short Preludes for the Organ. By various composers. Three Books.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Compiled for the benefit of those requiring a short introductory voluntary, these volumes will no doubt be widely accepted.

Variety of style is secured by the number of composers who have contributed, and all the pieces may be played upon a small two-manual organ. When to this is added the fact that the average time of performance is about one or one-and-a-quarter minutes, it will be seen that the requirements of a large number of organists have been studied and provided for, particularly those who have not developed their powers of extemporising.

Among the composers whose names are a guarantee of refined musicianship, may be mentioned: Thomas Adams, George J. Bennett, Myles B. Foster, Alfred Hollins, John E. West, W. Wolstenholme, &c. Their contributions exactly fulfil the purpose which called for them, and no organist may now plead the lack of suitable voluntaries, as he has here a choice of no fewer than thirty, offering variety of style and duration of performance. If we may offer any criticism, it would be that the majority of these pieces are in triple measure, though in most cases this has been subdued by the pace suggested, so that they need not necessarily be considered unsuitable in character.

The books are very attractive in appearance, while the music is clearly set out and printed.

At the annual meeting of the Brighton Sacred Harmonic Society held on May 30, presided over by the Mayor, there was a large attendance of members. The report stated that although the concerts were artistically successful there was considerable financial loss. The thanks of the Society to Mr. Robert Taylor, the conductor, were given in a resolution which recognised that the continued efficiency of the Society was mainly owing to his great abilities and enthusiastic work. The relations of the Society to the recent musical festival were explained and discussed. From the statement made at the meeting it would appear that the Society has some cause for complaint in that it was not recognised as a factor in the festival arrangements.