Review

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Three Hundred and Fifty Hymn-Tunes, &c., selected from various sources. By Gilbert H. W. Harrison.
[Norwood: Robert Rippon.]

WITH the memory of the number, variety, and excellence of the Hymn-books recently issued still fresh in the mind, it is difficult to perceive the reason for the appearance of the present publication. There are no new tunes to distinguish the book greatly among its kind, the best of the popular melodies have appeared in other works, and besides there are peculiar features in the collection which, of themselves, tend to limit the chances of a wide acceptance. In the first place, the words are for the most part wanting. In the second, the collection of tunes is disfigured by the appearance of many adaptations of melodies and parts of melodies which have already done duty in association with secular words or ideas. In the third place, the book is not equal with modern desires, as it contains a number of fossil tunes like "Hotham" (237), "Vital Spark" (140), "Here we suffer" (164), several of Dr. Gauntlett's vulgarisations of dignified tunes, and adaptations from part-songs or glees, and the "curly" perversions from Daniel's Psalter. These are unworthy of any modern Hymn-tune book for whatever purpose it may be designed. The absence of explanation leaves that purpose still undeclared. Perhaps it was incapable of justification. The pages are printed from transfer plates, clearly and legibly, and it is issued in a cheap form—namely, at the rate of one hundred tunes for a shilling.

The Psalter, as used in Lincoln Cathedral. By John M. Young. [Lincoln: George Gale.]

THIS is the second edition of a book originated some forty-two years ago by its author. Many alterations and improvements have been made, such as appeared to be necessary after a close daily observance extending over many years. Systems of pointing the Psalms vary in different places, and while each claims to possess special merits founded upon the defects of other works of like kind, all profess to have but one object—that of securing good chanting in the service. Many of the peculiarities of the several pointed Psalters arise from the author's notions as to the Syntax of the sentences, or his desire to accommodate the division of the words to some principles of doubtful or unsubstantial authority. Mr. Young gives a series of directions as to the manner of chanting, which are certainly based on common sense. In many of the verses it would seem that his directions as to the "halting point" in the recitation bars, make it a little too far away from the inflection, and it could not unfrequently occur that words important to the sense would lose some of the accent necessary. The employment of words of more than one syllable, such as "persecute" in Psalm VII., v. 1, for the first half of the bar after the recitation, would be difficult for any but the most perfectly trained choirs. Still, on the whole, the plan is sensible and the Psalter might with advantage be adopted in places where none is now used.

Handbell Ringing. By C. W. Fletcher.
[J. Curwen and Sons.]

HANDBELL ringing is a very old English pastime. In the "Wooring song of a Yeoman of Kent his son," when, for the benefit of the lady to whom he is addressing himself, the lover enumerates his accomplishments, he says:—

I can bravely clout my shoon,
And I right well can ring a bell.
Wherefore, cease off, make no delay,
And if you love me love me now,
Or else I'll seek some other where,
For I cannot come every day to woo.

The present is one of the very few modern attempts to offer the elements of instruction in the art, and it will be found useful to those who think of continuing the old English custom by new efforts. A complete description of the most convenient arrangement of the bells for rapid execution, the requirements of the players, the method of striking, tunes to be played in harmony or divided melody, and other matters more or less valuable. One of the tunes given is Knight's "She wore a wreath of roses." This has been possibly introduced by arrangement, for it is still copyright. There is an A misprinted for C in the last bar but one on page 41 in this tune.

Sonata in E minor, for the Organ. Op. 37. By Charles W. Pearce. [London Music Publishing Company.]

WE have more than once drawn attention to the clever organ music of Dr. Pearce, and this Sonata cannot be regarded otherwise than as a remarkable work, though the composer has lowered the dignity of his art by putting it before the world as it stands. The introduction and treatment of two ancient hymn tunes generally associated with the Advent season is of course legitimate enough, but not content with this he labels passages with texts, such as "The kingdom of Heaven is at hand," "One mightier than I cometh," "The distress of nations," "The trumpet sounds," "Fall on us, cover us," &c., the design being evidently to produce a realistic picture after the fashion of our old friend "The battle of Prague." That Dr. Pearce should stoop to this kind of thing is at once sad and surprising. Looked at as abstract music, the Sonata is necessarily disjointed, but the middle movement, intended to suggest the Incarnation, contains some excellent writing in the most modern style. In his next effort we hope to find that Dr. Pearce has left the field of claptrap to less talented composers.

The Groundwork of Music. By C. Webster.
[Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.]

THE author has arranged his labours so as to form two books. The first deals with "Graduated work for pupils upon Clefs, Time, Scales, Keys, and Intervals, with a few Concise Notes upon each subject." The second is set apart for "Fifty and five Miscellaneous Examination Papers (including 594 Questions)," upon the same matters as are treated of in the first part, with the addition of technical terms used in music. The work, which is "not intended to supersede the standard modern books upon 'Theory,' but to aid in understanding and remembering them," will be more useful to teachers as a guide to the form and variety which may be imparted to elementary lessons, than to students who desire to begin at the beginning. It plunges at once *in medias res* without preliminary explanations; therefore it does not deal so much with the groundwork of music as with a superstructure with scant foundation.

Songs of a Summer's Day. (Op. 8.) Four Vocal Duets. Words and Music by Frank J. Sawyer, Mus. Doc., Oxon.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS is a pleasing series of four gracefully written duets for treble voices, entitled respectively, "Dawn," "Noon," "Twilight," and "Night." There is a complete contrast in the pieces, though brightness of treatment and lively melody characterise them all. The accompaniments most happily enforce the spirit of the several themes. The "Dawn" opens tranquilly, but soon assumes a more joyous aspect; "Noon" by the brook, is charmingly dealt with; "Twilight" is involved in mysterious sounds conveyed by the occasional use of diminished fifths with an admirable, though daring effect; and "Night" brings us into the midst of a fairy revel. The voice parts are cleverly, yet spontaneously, designed; and it is certain that those who will take the trouble to study them will be glad for the knowledge and pleasure they will bring.

George Frederick Handel. By J. Cuthbert Hadden. Biographies of Great Composers.
[W. H. Allen and Co.]

To the making of biographies there is no end. The popular interest for musical history is being met on all sides in a variety of ways, good, bad, and indifferent. The "handy-book" form is being worked out in all possible forms. The first of a possible series of "Biographies of Great Composers" begins not improperly with Handel. His new historian, J. Cuthbert Hadden, brings no new facts to light, but the old facts are told in a pleasant way. All controversial points are carefully avoided, and the character of the man as well as his music are matters which have been most temperately dealt with. The book is pleasant and readable. A portrait, copied from an engraving, given as a frontispiece, is the least artistic feature of the publication.