Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 16, No. 372 (Feb. 1, 1874), p. 386

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3354994>

Accessed: 14-01-2016 17:37 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

instead of 5th from the bass, in the earlier chord, would have been far more agreeable. Another is the close upon a second inversion, the chord preceding the first double bar in No. 22. The end of a metrical line is necessarily a musical resting-place; and there can be no repose upon a chord which so imperatively demands something to follow it as does this form of the consonant triad. The "Ancient Melody," No. 19, is rendered extremely unsatisfactory by its harmonic treatment, which brings it to an end in the key of E flat, whereas it begins in that of C minor. Theorists who, to the confusion of musical knowledge, call these two keys "relative major and minor," can scarcely allow that either can be liable, any more than a human relative, for the responsibilities of the other; and the key of C, major or minor, is answerable, if it begin a piece, to return at the end of the same. The composer has not shown himself at his best in the tune called "Scarborough," after the town of his present incumbency, No. 18. We like No. 21, "Hereafter," far better; and esteem No. 4, "O render thanks unto the Lord," the best in the collection. The names of these last, and of one or two others, suggest that they were, perhaps, composed to poems, and not to blank metres: if such be the case, it helps to prove that, in vocal music, excellence is better approached by the attempt to express words and to declaim them, than by writing for a stated number of indefinite syllables.

Jubilate Deo, in C. For four voices, or for voices in unison. Composed by T. Richard Matthews, B.A.

THIS is not incorrectly written, and it is not difficult of performance; so it is likely to come into extensive use. We think the purpose to "serve two masters" is a mistake, since, what is intended for unison singing should have an independent accompaniment, consisting of sometimes longer, sometimes shorter notes than the voice parts; sometimes having detached chords against the sustained song, and other similar diversities, if the writer would display his voices to advantage, and make the best effect out of their combination with the organ; whereas, in a composition for four voices, in which simplicity of structure is a chief object, a totally different distribution of the harmony is desirable. Let the reverend composer settle this point with his own conscience.

Psyche. A Dramatic Cantata, for Solo voices and Chorus, with accompaniment for Pianoforte. Words by V. A. C. Amcotts. Music by J. F. H. Read.

AN examination of Mr. Read's Cantata impresses us with the idea that the composer could do better things were he less ambitious. His solos throughout the work are superior to his choruses; but there is a great deal to admire even in his choral writing, especially in those placid parts where the least is attempted. A diligent study of counterpoint would prevent the possibility of much of the part-writing we observe throughout the Cantata—as an instance of which we might point to the two consecutive fifths between the 6th and 7th bars, page 19, where F♯, C♯; G, D, are sung by sopranos and altos, and played in the accompaniment, an error which is made still more prominent between the last two bars of the same page. Amongst the best of the solos we may cite the Scena for Psyche, with chorus, interspersed with occasional solo passages for Eros, commencing "Nay, listen," many portions of which show the possession of dramatic feeling, and the Recitative and Air for Priest (bass) "Ye come then, fickle multitude" (also with chorus), which is well written for the voice throughout. There is also much to commend in the unaccompanied Quartet, "Thus after all my sorrow past," some of the passages of imitation in which are exceedingly effective; and a good point is gained by the sudden change from minor to major, for the commencement of the *Finale*. On the whole the pianoforte accompaniment is fairly written; but the effect of the Cantata will no doubt be much enhanced by its performance with an orchestra.

Marathon. A Cantata. Written by John Brion. Composed by R. Forsey Brion.

WE have here a composition whose difficulties will not

exclude it from any choral society even of the most modest pretensions, while they are sufficient to give a zest to its study, and make those engaged in its performance feel that they have something to accomplish. Its merit will stimulate and gratify the interest of an audience, being easily appreciable and fully satisfactory. The choral portions are highly effective, each part in them being so melodious as to be attractive to the singer; and the solo pieces are not only good on the ground of contrast and relief, but will bear extraction for private performance apart from the rest of the work. The severe problem indeed is here solved, of combining practical facility with musical interest; and, as what is easiest of execution is surest of efficient interpretation, an excellent, broad, sonorous and spirited effect may be relied upon from the performance of this Cantata.

A short, characteristic prelude seems to paint the anxiety of the people of Athens as to the fate of those noble heroes who have gone to defend the country against the countless host of invading Persians, which anxiety is dispelled by the joyous words of the out-runner of his fellows in arms, who falls dead in giving them utterance—"The victory is ours!" The people break out in shouts of victory, but are checked by a priest, who admonishes them to offer thanks to heaven, whereupon ensues a movement of placid religious character. A fugal movement succeeds to this, wherein the boastful advance of the foe is described, and its contrapuntal character displays well the power of the voices. The first number closes brilliantly with an amplification of the opening choral movement, "Victory! victory!" No. 2 is a bass Recitative, which tells of the supposed death of Miltiades, and is interrupted by No. 3, a song for Egina, the betrothed of the Athenian leader, lamenting the loss of her beloved. This is a simple and highly expressive Air. In No. 4, the bass announces the approach of the victorious army; and No. 5 is a kind of choral march, bidding welcome to the heroes, a piece whose strongly marked accent and sonorous vocal distribution secure for it an impressive effect. Then we have a Recitative, in which the enraptured Egina recognises her lover's form among the victors, which leads, of course, to a Duet, consisting of the delighted exclamations of the happily reunited pair. A most difficult situation is this for musical rendering; many admirable composers have fallen short in the attempt to paint in notes the ecstasy of faithful hearts that meet in joy after a separation in despairing anguish, and the fact of Beethoven's perfect success in the wondrous piece in G, in *Fidelio*, but adds to the difficulty of after writers; to set comparison aside, it is high praise to say that the instance before us is far from unsuccessful, and is certain of good effect. The final number is chiefly choral, being interspersed with strains for the three solo voices. It is full of spirit, its generally exultant character being varied by touches of tenderness, and it will leave the hearers with a most favourable last recollection of the work.

Mr. Brion is a young musician of whom nothing so extensive nor so important as this Cantata has yet appeared. Let him take encouragement from his successful accomplishment of an arduous task, and aim again and again at the same high mark with the growing certainty of a still more practised hand.

Songs in Three-part Harmony. For the use of Elementary Choirs. Edited by Charles Maclean.

THE arranger of these songs has shown every desire to meet the requirements of amateur vocalists. In the first place, "the arrangement for a Bass part" (says Mr. Maclean) "with two upper parts interchangeable for male or female voices, offers more pliancy than the usual disposition in four parts," and, in the second place, "the two upper parts can be sung in duet, without the bass vocal parts." "The pieces," he also states, "can be sung in trio or in quintet, and by solo voices or by full chorus." The "quintet," we presume, is to be gained by doubling the two upper parts an octave below, although we can scarcely imagine this term to be applicable to an arrangement where male and female voices sing the same notes. So carefully considered an arrangement as this will be a boon