Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 16, No. 375 (May 1, 1874), p. 490

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3352232>

Accessed: 14-01-2016 22:41 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>

A Sea Song. For a Soprano or Tenor Voice. Words by W. C. Bennett. Music by W. Howell Allchin.

WE do not particularly like the progression of harmony which forms the introductory symphony to this song, but when the voice and accompaniment fairly start in A minor, the phrases are exceedingly dramatic. The theme in the tonic major, too, is extremely melodious and sympathetic with the words. We think that, had the composer been less learned in his harmonies, his music would have been more effective, for his continual chromatic and enharmonic changes will distress both the vocalist and accompanist. Take, for example, the skip from the harmony of B minor to that of C major, in the last bar but one on the 5th page, and then the progression which is produced by the enharmonic alteration of the C natural to B sharp, and the effect is most unsatisfactory—in fact, when we are eventually landed in C sharp minor it becomes a relief, remote as the key is; for “any port in a storm” is better than drifting about at sea. Mr. Allchin shows much musical feeling both in this and some other compositions which have come before us; but his harmonies are laboured, and we wish it to be understood that we object to many of them, not because they are *wrong*—for who shall arrogate to himself the power of pronouncing so decisive a verdict—but because we do not think that their effect is good.

BURNS AND OATES.

Cherubini: Memorials illustrative of his Life. By Edward Bellasis, Barrister-at-law.

THE catalogue of Cherubini's works, placed at the end of this volume, is a grave comment upon the state of the average musical knowledge in the present day. True it is that the compositions of this great master and profound thinker serve as a model for many of our most earnest students; but the general public—even those who profess to be exceptionally devoted to the art—know but comparatively few of the many immortal creations named in the list so ably compiled by the author of the work before us. And yet it may be truly said that never did a composer work more steadfastly and truthfully than Cherubini. Unmoved by the temporary successes of his rivals, he pursued his own course, with a veneration for his art which amounted almost to a religion; and that during his long career his intellectual power was ever steadily increasing may be evidenced by the fact of his having composed the second Requiem in D minor at seventy-six years of age. The task of collecting the many facts contained in the book under notice has evidently been a labour of love to Mr. Bellasis, and we sincerely hope that his efforts may be rewarded as they deserve to be. The date of Cherubini's birth, our author tells us, was the 14th of September, 1760, and it may be interesting to those who wish to recall the state of music at that time to be also informed that this was “one year and a half after Handel's death, when Mozart was a child of four years, and ten years before the birth of Beethoven.” When very young he began to compose, but we have been told that Halévy, who perused some of his juvenile works after Cherubini's death, pronounced that although everything he found announced the intelligent child, brought up in a good school, and reared on good precepts, there was nothing to indicate the genius which was afterwards to reveal itself. Luckily the young artist, who had mastered the organ and harpsichord under Castrucci, and was already pointed out as a prodigy, was proof to flattery, and resolved to travel through Italy for the purpose of becoming personally known to musicians, as well as to perfect himself in his art. Being the son of poor parents, it is not at all probable that this intention could have been carried out, had not Peter Leopold II., Grand-Duke of Tuscany, and afterwards Emperor of Austria, offered at his own expense to send him to Bologna, where he immediately placed himself under Sarti, whose valuable instruction, although somewhat pedantic, was no doubt highly beneficial to the youthful composer. His first Opera, “*Il Quinto Fabio*,” produced at Alessandria, was shortly followed by many others; and after visiting England, where he brought out two Operas, he took up his

residence in Paris, which was destined to be his future home, and where the brilliancy of his public career may be said to have commenced. The Revolution impeded his progress as a composer, for his connection had been with the aristocracy, and now they were flying in all directions, or mounting the scaffold. It is, indeed, related that the fact of his having studied the violin when a child was at this time the means of saving his life; for on one occasion having fallen into the hands of a band of *sansculottes*, who were seeking musicians to conduct their chants, Cherubini sternly refused to join them. The fatal cry, “The Royalist,” having been raised, a brother artist, who had also been kidnapped, seeing his friend's danger, thrust a violin into his unwilling hands and succeeded in persuading him to head the mob. “The whole day,” our author says, “these two musicians accompanied the hoarse and overpowering yells of that revolutionary assemblage, and when at last a halt was made in a public square, where a banquet took place, Cherubini and his friend had to mount some empty barrels and play till the feasting was over.” To recount only a few of the many triumphs achieved by Cherubini in the French capital would be here impossible; but we may say that Mr. Bellasis, who is evidently an enthusiastic admirer of this composer's music, not only gives us some able remarks of his own upon the works mentioned, but collects some highly interesting critiques by various writers contributed both to English and foreign journals. As we have already said, our knowledge either of the sacred or secular compositions of Cherubini is in this country extremely limited; and were they ever to be brought prominently into notice, as in the case of the resuscitation of Bach's works, we should be astonished to find that so rich a treasure had been so long allowed to remain uncared for. “*Medea*,” one of the grandest works ever composed for the lyric stage, has certainly been revived; but since 1870, when it was given at Covent Garden, it has ceased to be heard. “*Les Deux Journées*” was also presented to the aristocratic subscribers of the Drury Lane Opera in 1872—properly translated into Italian and with the dialogue set to recitative by Sir Michael Costa—but so little was it found to accord with the taste of the day that it was never repeated. Should the time ever arrive in this country when the frequenters of our Opera-houses shall be attracted by the music instead of the singers, or when those in authority at the musical festivals (now steadily increasing) shall select the finest, instead of the newest, specimens of sacred art, we may hope that Cherubini's works will be appreciated at their true value. Meanwhile it is good to be occasionally reminded that such noble compositions are waiting for a hearing; and we give a cordial welcome to the volume before us, not only on account of its intrinsic merit, but because we believe that it will have the effect of drawing public attention to the long neglected works of one who throughout his long life zealously upheld the highest interests of the art of which he was so bright an ornament. We have only to add that the book contains a portrait of the composer, with a fac-simile of his autograph; and that musical illustrations are freely used in the course of the many critical notices.

STANLEY LUCAS, WEBER AND CO.

Three Fairy Tales. Characteristic pieces for the Piano-forte.

No. 1, *Queen Mab*. No. 2, *The Gnome's Wedding*.

No. 3, *Undine*.

Composed by Oscar Beringer.

“CHARACTERISTIC Pieces” are dangerous compositions for any but experienced writers. Even Mendelssohn, as a rule, avoided giving titles to his smaller compositions, preferring that they should tell their own tale, or—failing to call up any definite idea—be accepted as abstract music. Mr. Beringer is more venturesome, and invites a two-fold criticism; for we have to consider not only whether he has written three good piano-forte pieces, but whether they fulfil the character suggested by their titles. No. 1 has a capital subject, the division of the opening passages between the two hands giving much lightness to the theme. The feeling, too, is well preserved where the change of key