Review: Pianoforte Music

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Mr. Warlock (*is it a *nom de plume*?—if not, it ought to be*) has caught the spirit of the words perfectly. All three are first-rate, but the palm must go to 'As ever I saw,' which is as delightful a modern-antique as ever I heard.

PIANOFORTE MUSIC.

Theme and Six Diversions. For pianoforte duet and pianoforte solo. By Edward German.

Valse Lyrique. By Percy E. Fletcher.
[Novello & Co.]

The Good-humoured Ladies. By Scarlatti-Tommasini.
[J. & W. Chester.]

The Joyful Homecoming. By H. Balfour Gardiner.
[Forsyth Brothers.]

First Bagatelle, Pastoral (No. 1). By Cyril Scott.
[Elkin & Co.]

Among recent orchestral novelties, one of the most successful has been Edward German's *Theme and Six Diversions*. The composer has been well advised in arranging them for pianoforte solo and pianoforte duet, in which forms they will surely make a wide appeal. The solo version is fairly difficult, needing a brilliant style. As a duet, the music is well within the powers of moderately endowed players. Has German ever written two more attractive movements than the Gipsy Dance and the Waltz of this work? I doubt it. Nothing is more surprising than the ease and naturalness with which the somewhat ecclesiastical theme is developed into a couple of piquant dances. Readers who have heard the work played by an orchestra may fancy that its success was due largely to the glittering brilliance of its instrumentation. These pianoforte versions prove that the dress matters very little. The music's the thing. Here it is so fresh and tuneful that it will make friends, whatever the medium of its performance.

Mr. Fletcher's 'Valse Lyrique' is a transcription of his popular song 'The Smile of Spring,' and is a pleasing piece of salon music, of moderate difficulty.

The music of 'The Good-humoured Ladies' needs no introduction to the numerous Londoners who have enjoyed it at the Russian Ballet. They will be glad to have a pianoforte edition. It consists of about twenty of Scarlatti's best harpsichord pieces, and so needs no further recommendation.

Mr. Balfour Gardiner's 'Joyful Homecoming' is a piece which was so successful on its first performance at the Promenades that it received the rare honour of an encore. The composer has arranged it as a pianoforte solo, in which form its cheerful strains should reach a wide circle. It presents no difficulties save in the matter of chord playing, a good accommodating grasp being needed to obtain the right sonority.

Mr. Cyril Scott's 'Bagatelle' and 'Pastoral' are easier to play than most of his pieces. They contain a good deal of wayward charm, and not a little that is merely perverse. The best feature in the 'Bagatelle' is its fluid rhythm. I wish Mr. Scott would write some pieces minus shifting sevenths, ninths, and thirteenths. They were so surprising once upon a time, but they have long since become a convention, and a cloying one at that.

ORGAN MUSIC.

Fantasy in A. Carillon in A flat. By J. A. Sowerbutts.
[Novello & Co.]

Two very bright and tuneful pieces. The *Fantasy* is the longer and more ambitious, with three capital themes, not too well contrasted perhaps, as they have all much the same gait. The first and third are combined with excellent results on page 9. Mr. Sowerbutts is at his best in writing of this kind. It has much of the quality of chamber music. There is some neat canonic treatment here and there, an especially effective bit being that over the dominant pedal at the end. Here a good tuba can be made the most of. The *Fantasy* is moderately difficult, and is suitable for voluntary and recital purposes.

The *Carillon* is a recital piece pure and simple. It is an ingenious treatment of a tiny *ostinato* consisting of the notes E flat, D natural, and F—really an ornamented E flat, the dominant of the piece. This chiming figure is played on the choir with 8-ft., 4-ft., and 2-ft. stops, while the right hand and pedals discourse fluently and melodiously. The three

notes are invested with great variety and interest, but there is nothing farfetched. Relief is provided by a middle section in B major, wherein the chime has a rest. The 'Carillon' should be popular. Mr. Sowerbutts is an organ composer of whom a good deal more will be heard, unless I am mistaken. The only fault to find with him at present is a tendency to suspend animation before the entry of a new theme. Such halts are convenient for registration purposes, and are unobjectionable so long as they do not make themselves felt as halts. It is possible to 'carry on' over such points, just as a good singer appears to be singing through rests, and even interludes. When he is over these danger points, and well under way, Mr. Sowerbutts's writing is so excellent that his future work will be looked for with interest.

Letters to the Editor.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY SPECIAL CHOIR.

SIR,—The response to the appeal for members of the above choir, which was made known through the courtesy of the Press, has been most gratifying as regards both the number and the capacity of those who have come forward. The choir is nearly complete, and rehearsals are commencing forthwith. Arrangements are being made for the following performances: Monday, December 8, at 8.0, 'Israel in Egypt'; Monday, March 22, 1920, at 8.0, 'St. Matthew' Passion; Monday, June 7, at 8.0, Unaccompanied Motets.

It is now exigent to appeal to music-lovers, who may not themselves be performers, for an equally encouraging support on the financial side. In a venture such as this there are necessarily certain heavy expenses which will not again recur; but if the music is to be performed in the best possible way, it is hardly to be expected that even the current expenses will regularly be met by the collections alone. We therefore ask, first of all, for donations; but in order that we may be able adequately to meet the initial expenses, these should amount to at least £300. Secondly, we ask for annual subscriptions, in order that we may have a reserve fund to cover current expenses; annual subscribers will be entitled to three tickets for each performance in respect of each guinea subscribed. Thirdly, we ask for a guarantee fund; guarantors will be entitled to one ticket for each performance in respect of each half-guinea guaranteed. In the event of a deficit, the loss will be divided amongst the guarantors *pro rata*.

Donations, subscriptions, or offers to guarantee, should be sent to The Receiver-General of Westminster Abbey, The Sanctuary, Westminster, S.W.-1. Cheques should be made payable to the 'Westminster Abbey Special Choir Fund.'—Yours, &c.,

SYDNEY H. NICHOLSON

(Organist and Master of the Choristers, Westminster Abbey).

MR. NEWMAN AND SCRIBAN.

SIR,—After succumbing to an uncontrollable fit of laughter during a recent performance of Scriabin's 'Prometheus,' I feel myself entitled to the honour of belonging to the species known as the 'plain man' (who rises in revolt) referred to in Mr. Newman's criticism in the *Evening Standard* of September 24. I am told that I do not listen with my imagination and that my ear will tolerate any discord so long as it is the necessary and natural medium of an idea. Be that as it may, I am certain that as long as I am equipped with the brace of ears that I have at present I shall come no nearer toleration than laughter when a theme on the trumpets leaps out at a tangent, as it were, and cocks a snook at me from mid-air, or when a combination of cymbals and dinner gongs proclaim the 'ardours and ecstasies of realised and unrealised desire.'

But is not Mr. Newman somewhat inconsistent, or is it merely that he has turned a complete mental somersault during the last ten years? In his book on Strauss, written in 1908, he says *à propos* the 'Don Juan' dying shudder and the 'Don Quixote' dying sigh: 'But it is one thing to extend the scope of musical speech in this legitimate way and quite another to make a bogus extension by merely *tacking a literary label on to a handful of notes that cannot possibly be made to mean what the label says they mean*' (italics are mine). He then goes on to point out that 'when Strauss writes a sequence of notes and tells us that it is meant to