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A Shadow. What Lack the Valleys and Mountains? Song by Adelaide Anne Procter; W. Howell Allchin

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tax the powers of expression possessed by the performer, but which will undoubtedly repay a careful study. No. 37, the Apostle's profession of repentance, "O that my head were waters," is penitential, but perhaps might have been improved upon. The next number deserving special notice is No. 40, the lament of the Lord's mother, "I mourn as a dove," a soprano song, which has already gained a good report far and wide, and most deservedly. Graceful, expressive, and most pathetic phrases of melody are here supported by an accompaniment which is interesting, without being obtrusive; every sentence of the song is charming. The next number (41) begins with a Dead March. Why? The introduction of such a movement, as a preliminary to the Crucifixion, reminds us of the custom, not unknown in London, of playing the Dead March from "Saul" on Good Friday. If such an utterly ludicrous misappropriation of music could be seriously spoken of, it would have to be called blasphemous. The introduction of two themes simultaneously, previously given out separately, is not ingenious, but the music lacks dignity. No. 43a. "He will swallow up death in victory," is a spirited double-chorus, containing some most effective and pleasing antiphonal imitation to the words, "And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." At No. 44, we enter on the last scene of St. Peter's life included in the Oratorio, his imprisonment and miraculous release. The song of the delivering angel (No. 45), "Gird up thy loins, arise!" is one of those great songs which, while it fills us with admiration, makes us also regret that so few will be able to master its difficulties. The compass, E $\flat$ to C in alt, or D $\flat$ *ad lib.*, will limit its performance to a few of our best professional sopranos. It is a masterpiece of triumphant declamation. In the Chorus of Angels, (No. 46), the insertion of which seems quite unnecessary, a double forte on a down beat, to the word "*The*" Holy one, is not happy. St. Peter's thanksgiving, "The Lord hath sent His angel," (No. 48), is soon followed by the final chorus, "Sing unto God," from which we are glad to say an Amen-Fugue has not been excluded, inasmuch as no finer climax to an Oratorio has yet been discovered than a Fugue. Mr. Benedict handles his subjects with great contrapuntal skill, yet he has wisely not neglected those modern resources of harmony and modulation, which must inevitably be incorporated sooner or later into the Art or Counterpoint. The end crowns the work worthily.

From the frequent alternation of hearty praise and undisguised blame which runs throughout the foregoing remarks, the reader will probably anticipate our general statement, that the Oratorio of St. Peter is of very uneven merit; much appears in it which may well stand side by side with the greatest Oratorios of this century, yet the weak points are too evident. The recitatives throughout we cannot but call unworthy of so great a work. Perhaps they were hurried. Few authors sit down to write a recitative before they have sketched, either in mind or on paper, the more important numbers. The uniform want of strength and vigour would have led us to suspect the author to have been pressed for time, even if he had not told his own tale by giving us subdivided numbers. (No.—A. No.—B). But, taken all in all, the work is fresh, displays great mastery in melody and counterpoint, and has not only already given to many high intellectual pleasure, but will continue to do so, and will stamp the author as one of the best musicians of his time. We could have wished it had been more advanced in style; but it must not be forgotten that Mr. Benedict has lived many years in England, and the bad influence of press criticism in keeping back advanced music, and of the highest social classes in fostering bad music, is too well known amongst students of music to be enlarged on here. It is, of course, not the duty of a musical reviewer to give an opinion on the merits of the libretto of St. Peter; we gladly abstain, therefore, from more than an allusion to the unfortunate altercation which has taken place between those whose talents and character make their remarks deserving of consideration. But, on the other hand, it would be a

great piece of injustice to Mr. Benedict, as a composer, if any weakness in the general effect due to the ill-constructed libretto, were to be laid to his charge. It has been often said, and must be well known, that the chief difficulty which beset the use of the life of St. Peter, as the subject of an Oratorio, was the necessary introduction of the Divine Master Himself, whose presence would naturally throw into the background the doings of a servant, even though that servant should be the great Apostle. We should have naturally expected therefore, that two points would have been kept carefully in view in the libretto; first, the importance of introducing as little of the life of our Lord as possible; secondly, the necessity of bringing prominently forward everything which could show forth the greatness of the hero. We are therefore surprised to find Nos. 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, occupied entirely with our Lord's Passion, of course banishing St. Peter from the hearers' minds for no inconsiderable time. But this is not all; the St. Peter of history is St. Peter of the pastoral staff and keys, the former commission being given to him in those touching words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep," which, if clothed with the merest gauze of sweet sound, must melt all hearts; the latter authority granted by the memorable "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church." The entire omission of these two passages is as astonishing as unfortunate. We can now say that almost every great composer has left a "*Tu es Petrus*," except the composer of St. Peter, an Oratorio, 1870. The fact that a large mass of our fellow christians draw erroneous deductions from these important words, is no reason why we should ignore them. The words are "selected from Holy Scriptures," yet these texts from the authorised version have been overlooked. A hint as to the course the narrative should have taken may be gathered from the well known lines penned by that poet and divine, dear to us all, who, guided by angel-hand, has so lately been released from his earthly prison.

Touch'd, he upstarts—his chains unbind—
Through darksome vault, up massy stair,
His dizzy, doubting footsteps wind
To freedom and cool moonlight air.

Then all himself, all joy and calm,
Though for awhile his hand forego,
Just as it touch'd the martyr's palm,
He turns him to his task below;

The pastoral staff, the keys of Heaven,
To wield awhile in grey-haired might,
Then from his cross to spring forgiven,
And follow Jesus out of sight.

Tarantella Brillante; for the Pianoforte. Composed by King Hall.

WE see no more reason why a piece should be called "brilliant" upon the title-page than that a song should be called pathetic or joyful. Surely the composition can be allowed to speak for itself; and we need scarcely say, that if its characteristic peculiarity cannot be discovered by those who listen, it can scarcely be worth much. In the present instance the "brilliance" of the *Tarantella* is hardly sufficiently prominent to justify its title; many similar pieces we could name, published without any such prefix, being infinitely more entitled to it. Apart from this question, however, we have nothing but good words to offer Mr. Hall, who comes before us as a composer for the first time. The subject of his dance is light, graceful, and melodious; and the passages are evidently written by a skilful master of his instrument. The themes in the subdominant and the relative minor are also tuneful, and flow with that ease which equally pleases performer and listener. We can conscientiously recommend this *Tarantella* to those who are searching for what we may call "finger-music."

A Shadow. What lack the Valleys and Mountains? Song. Words by Miss Adelaide Anne Procter. Composed by W. Howell Allchin.

THERE is much cleverness in this song, and a good feeling is evinced for the expression of the words; but

the vocal part is overweighted by the accompaniment, which runs mercilessly on almost without cessation throughout. We have used the conventional word "accompaniment" to denote the portion of the composition allotted to the pianist; but in truth we may say that it is a pianoforte piece with an accompaniment for the voice, for rarely indeed does the instrument assume a subordinate position. Even where this character is so well preserved as in this song, the effect is wearisome, the listener continually hoping that in the battle between the pianist and vocalist, one or the other will succumb, and afford him at least a few bars of repose. The composition is however evidently the work of a good musician, and our praise of both the vocal and pianoforte part proves how happy we could be with either. We particularly admire the phrase in $1\frac{1}{2}$ rhythm; and the final bars are thoroughly sympathetic with the poetry.

CRAMER AND Co. (LIMITED.)

Three Musical Sketches for the Pianoforte. Composed by C. W. Smith.

WITHOUT crediting Mr. Smith with the rare merit of having set any new pattern in pianoforte music, we may say that he has produced three extremely elegant pieces, on a model which is followed by the majority of the composers of the day. The "Lieder ohne worte," sometimes brilliant and sometimes calmly expressive, issued by English music-publishers, under all sorts of fantastic titles, within the last few years, must, we should imagine, have so glutted the market that no new composition of this class would have a chance of a sale. Such, however, is clearly not the case, as our piles of music for review will amply attest; and here, as we have already said, are some very good specimens of these wordless songs, by a composer whose name is new to us. No. 1, in B minor, has a flowing melody, carefully accompanied, and by no means difficult to play. The change into B flat major, after the close in D, is effective; and the manner in which the return to the original key is managed, by enharmonically changing the G flat into F sharp, deserves commendation. The second piece we scarcely like so well. The melody is not so striking, and there is rather more rambling without design than is observable in No. 1. The modulations, too, are somewhat violent, although we must do Mr. Smith the justice to say that the parts are all most satisfactorily written. No. 3 is a melodious air in A flat major, the quiescent character of which is well contrasted by an energetic passage, accompanied with octaves for the left hand. The conclusion of this little piece is highly poetical, the subject dying off with much effect, accompanied with some harmonies which have not before appeared.

Cradle Song. Composed by E. Kelseig.

CRADLE-songs, boat-songs, and all other songs with a character which can be expressed upon the title-page, are extremely fascinating to inexperienced composers, for however poor the melody may be, the figure in the accompaniment is sure to tell; and thus mediocre compositions may very often be pushed forward, which, without such artificial aid, would scarcely perhaps be tolerated. The song before us is a proof of this; for the accompaniment, with its rocking effect, appears to have been primary in the mind of the composer, and the melody seems to have been written to it. In parts, too, the determination to preserve the character of the pianoforte accompaniment, given out in the opening bars, causes some rather harsh effects with the voice part; and we must also mention that the monotony caused by the want of any change of key becomes somewhat painful to the listener. The song, however, shows some musical feeling, and the composer may perhaps do better when not fettered by the necessity of rocking a child to sleep by waving *arpeggios*.

LAMBORN COCK AND Co.

Rondo, for the Pianoforte. By Westley Richards (Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.)

THE modest title "Rondo, for the Pianoforte," made us select this work from a pile of "Salon" music, in the hope of seeing some faint indication of a return to health and strength, after the many years in which the art of pianoforte composition in this country has feebly dragged on an existence of comparative uselessness. Mr. Richards's Rondo does not altogether please us in its construction; but his good intentions should ensure him a warm welcome. We do not like the *arpeggios* at the commencement of his piece; and there is a somewhat incongruous mixture of old and new forms in the passages; but it contains good solid workmanship throughout, and his subjects are bold, melodious, and remarkably well harmonised. We hope shortly to meet with so conscientious a composer again.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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Our correspondents will greatly oblige by writing all names as clearly as possible, as we cannot be responsible for any mistakes that may occur.

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AMATEUR.—The question should be put to a professor of singing.

EDMD. E. D'ENYER.—Enquire of the publishers, Rudall, Rose, Carte and Co., 20, Charing Cross.

Brief Summary of Country News.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for any opinions expressed in this Summary; as all the notices are either collated from the local papers, or supplied to us by occasional correspondents.

ACTON TRUSSELL, STAFFORD.—On Tuesday, the 27th September, the ancient Parish Church (which during the past nine months has undergone a complete restoration) was re-opened for divine worship. The sermon in the morning was preached by the Lord Bishop of Lichfield, and in the afternoon by the Rev. Dr. Fraser, Vicar of Alton. In the afternoon a full choral service was performed by the Choir, assisted by the Choirs of Rednall, Christ Church, Stafford, and Walton. The prayers were intoned by the Rev. C. H. Fuller, of Walton, and the musical portion of the services was directed by Mr. W. A. Marson, Organist of Christ Church, Stafford, who presided at the Harmonium, which he kindly lent to the church for the occasion. The opening services were continued on Sunday, the 2nd ult., when the preachers were the Vicar, the Rev. J. R. Alsop, and the Rev. E. J. Wrottesley, of Brewood. There was a large congregation on each occasion, and the collections amounted to upwards of £50.

ALNWICK.—In honour of the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein to Alnwick Castle, his Grace the Duke of Northumberland gave a grand concert in the Guest Hall of the Castle. The artists engaged for the occasion were of high standing in the musical world, and included the excellent choir of Mr. Rea, who, together with Mr. Hare, of Newcastle, superintended the arrangements in connexion with the concert; and the manner in which everything passed off reflected the highest credit on both these gentlemen. Mr. T. A. Alderson was the accompanist to the choir.

ASTON, NEWPORT, SALOP.—On Wednesday, the 5th ult., a Concert was given in the National School-room by the choir, assisted by several ladies. The principal vocalists were Mrs. Liddle, Miss Avena Blackburne, the Misses Bulley, and Mr. Palmer. The concert was so successful that it was repeated on the following night, when almost every composition was encored. In addition to the vocal pieces, a duet was very well played by Miss Bedwell and Miss Avena Blackburne, and Mrs. Ashdown also gave a pianoforte