Review

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he hurls anathema upon the gods of murder, incest, and adultery, *Néarque* presently joining with him. Then, while *Pauline* prays to Jupiter for mercy, the two Christians mount the steps of the temple and hurl the images from their pedestals, the crowd giving forth a cry of horror as they do so. A brief silence ensues, followed by a burst of triumphant sarcasm from *Polyeucte* and *Néarque*, as they call upon Jupiter to avenge himself:—

What the god fails to do his priest attempts. Seizing a hatchet *Albin* rushes on *Polyeucte*, who is guarded, at a word from *Sévère*, by the soldiers. Less fortunate, *Néarque* is struck down and dies, calling upon Jesus to receive his spirit, at which point—amid immense agitation, while *Pauline* prays for her husband, *Polyeucte* demands to share the fate of his friend, and the people call for vengeance—begins a grand concluding *ensemble*, one of the longest in the work, and also one of the most vigorous and exciting. The curtain descends while still the infuriated priests and mob strive to reach *Polyeucte* and tear him to pieces.

The fourth act opens in *Polyeucte's* prison. The destined martyr is thinking of *Pauline*, and in a beautiful and expressive *Andante* prays to be delivered from the temptations that assail him. He feels the divine strength:—

The air is considerably extended and in M. Gounod's most passionate vein. But now the cell-door opens and *Pauline* enters. She has come to persuade her husband to abjure his faith and live. Earnestly she pleads her love, but *Polyeucte*, lifting his hands and eyes to heaven, invokes *Néarque* to support his resolution. More than this, he takes from his bosom the Christian scriptures, and reads in monotone the story of the Nativity, while a pretty pastoral theme is heard from the orchestra:—

Again *Pauline* remonstrates and entreats, but *Polyeucte* bethinks him of the death of his master and reads aloud the narrative of the Crucifixion, his voice rising a step of the scale at each sentence, and gathering fervour as it goes. Still the urgency of the wife continues, eventually taking the form of reproach as the unmovable *Polyeucte* offers a prayer for her conversion:—

This important duet, of which we will only say that it scarcely meets the requirements of the situation, having ended, *Sévère* enters the cell, and adds his entreaties to those of *Pauline*, with no better success. The fatal phrase first quoted above reigns in the orchestra amid all the varied passion of the moment, and we know the end is coming. It is very near indeed, when, as *Pauline* and *Sévère* try to drag the martyr away, *Félix*, with a guard of soldiers, stands on the threshold. *Polyeucte* may still save his life, but will scarcely grant to fear what he has denied to love. He simply answers *Félix*, "I am a Christian." Then says the Governor to the guards, who have closed round the prisoner, "Go." "Whither?" asks *Sévère*. The answer is, "To death!" but *Polyeucte* cries, "To glory!" The curtain falls as *Pauline* drops senseless at her father's feet. The whole of the music to this finale is of the most high-strung character, full of masterly touches, and often marked by exquisite sentiment, which bespeaks the poet not less than the musician.

The fifth and last act begins in a public place fronting the arena of Mitylene. A great crowd has gathered, and is singing "Death to the Christians" in turbulent chorus, the music being that of the orchestral introduction to the entire work. Their fierce cries end abruptly as the martyr and his guards appear, while from the violins comes a long-drawn melody, also used in the introduction:—

The procession halts in the place, while a *Centurion* on horseback reads the death-judgment. He would save *Polyeucte* and bids him even now abjure; but the steady convert replies: "Hear, all of you, priests and butchers;" and then begins his confession of Christian faith:—

Even his persecutors admire this courage, interrupting the "Credo" with their exclamations. Into the midst of this impressive scene *Pauline* now comes with an heroic resolution. She believes in the God that so sustains her husband, and is prepared to share the martyr's fate. Declaring this before all in fervid phrases while the harps strike triumphant chords, she seals her doom. The crowd rage more wildly than ever, but high above their noise is heard the "Credo," sung in octaves by the devoted pair. This situation is continued for some time with ever-increasing intensity, but finally the martyrs are forced into the circus, where the lions await them. A change of scene enables us to follow. The edifice is crowded, and in the centre of the arena kneel *Polyeucte* and *Pauline*, for whose blood the multitude begin once more to cry. But the agony is not prolonged. A ray of sunlight falls upon the pair, who sing together, "It is God that glorifies us and calls us to the skies." "Death!" shouts the mob. Then we see the grille of the lion's den open, and an official unchaining the beasts. The curtain falls.

We have little to add. "*Polyeucte*" is hardly an Opera in the accepted sense of the word. It is a great religious work, exalted in its aim, and marked by immense fervour, simplicity, and power. If it may not be heard in our lyric theatres, there is a place for its music in our concert-rooms—at any rate, a place should be found, for it is music we cannot afford to lose.

The Works of Henry Purcell. Volume I. "The Yorkshire Feast-Song." [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

"PURCELL," says Dr. Burney, "is as much the boast of England in music as Shakespeare in the drama, Milton in epic poetry, Locke in metaphysics, or Sir Isaac Newton in mathematics and philosophy." That this is true can scarcely admit of a doubt; but whilst the great names in the drama, poetry, metaphysics, and mathematics are kept alive by the sympathies of the many, music has had so few devotees that the works of a man who is the "boast" of our country have been almost allowed to die out. In 1788 Goodison printed as many of the master's compositions as were available; but in spite of his energetic efforts in the cause only about 100 subscribers supported him, and he soon retired from his hopeless task. Forty years afterwards Vincent Novello commenced the publication of Purcell's sacred music, and carried it on with such energy that in a short time he had given to the world what was then thought to be a complete collection. But so far from the genius of this composer having been more especially revealed through his works for the Church, it became well-known that some of his best writings were of a secular character, many indeed for the operatic stage. He is proved to have composed music for nearly fifty dramas, his odes and choral songs still in MS. numbering twenty-four; so that, even reckoning the collections of Goodison and Novello already alluded to, the few printed by himself, and under the auspices of his widow, and three works issued by the Musical Antiquarian Society, it may be imagined how many treasures are still hidden from us. It should be mentioned

that since the publication of Novello's edition of the master's sacred music a folio volume has been discovered in the Royal Library containing many of his anthems with symphonies and instrumental parts, odes, and miscellaneous songs; and at York Minster several other volumes of his sacred music have come to light. It will be thus seen that the labour of publishing a complete edition of Purcell's works is no light one; but the materials being fairly before us, it required only that a number of artists and lovers of art should form themselves into an Association pledged to rescue from comparative obscurity the compositions of one who has shed such lustre upon English music. Happily this has now been accomplished: the "Purcell Society," formed in 1876 for the publication of this composer's works, most of which exist only in manuscript, and also for meeting to study and perform his compositions, is now in active operation, and the Ode at the head of our notice, composed in the year 1689 for the annual gathering in London of the gentry of the county of York, is the first volume issued. As a proof that the music of this Ode was fully appreciated on the occasion for which it was written, we may mention that in D'Urfey's "Pills to Purge Melancholy" we find the whole of the words of the "Yorkshire Feast-Song," with the heading "An Ode on the Assembly of the Nobility and Gentry of the City and County of York at the Anniversary Feast, March the 27th, 1690. Set to Musick by Mr. Henry Purcell. One of the finest compositions he ever made, and cost £100 the performing." Considering how zealous have been the exertions of Mr. W. H. Cummings in promoting the formation of the Purcell Society, and how energetically he has devoted himself to the cause, no fitter person could have been selected to edit the present volume; and it need scarcely be said how excellently he has performed his task. In his preface he says: "I possess two complete scores of the work in his (Purcell's) own handwriting, and an old transcript bearing the same date; there is also another very interesting copy of the score in a volume largely in Purcell's hand, and formerly in the possession of Purcell's son and grandson, but now happily preserved in the library of Her Majesty the Queen;" so that with these authentic records at hand we may feel perfectly assured that the work is here published precisely as the composer wrote it. Much, too, could be said, not only upon the excellent taste apparent in the "getting up" of the volume—the title-page, with a portrait of the composer, being in perfect sympathy with the general design—but upon the clear appearance both of the music and the letter-press; indeed, we have scarcely ever seen a more perfect specimen of engraving. With this tangible proof of the Society's efforts before us, there can be little doubt that the earnestness of purpose which has called the Association into existence will continue to animate the members in the noble task they have undertaken. But earnestness of purpose is not sufficient; the Society must largely increase before great results can be looked for, and we sincerely hope, therefore, that all Purcell-lovers will co-operate in the movement by enrolling their names as subscribers to a cause which should be so dear to the hearts of Englishmen.

Novello's Music Primers. Edited by Dr. Stainer.

Instrumentation, by Ebenezer Prout, B.A.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

MR. PROUT has so amply proved by his orchestral works how thoroughly he has mastered the subject of instrumentation that we could scarcely doubt his power of minutely analysing the capabilities of the several instruments, and supporting his remarks by quotations from the scores of the best masters. But in reviewing his contribution to the rapidly increasing series of "Music Primers" we must award him praise far beyond that which should be accorded to one who has merely displayed an accurate knowledge of the almost inexhaustible resources of orchestration, for throughout his task he has never ceased to remember that he is a teacher—never allowed his enthusiasm for the art so to override his judgment as to make him forget that he is addressing a tyro—and in that respect, apart from the excellent material of which his treatise is composed, we cannot but believe that his work will supplant many of those which are even more complex and more fully developed. A student desirous of acquiring the art of instrumentation is

of course presumed to be already a musician; and we are glad to find that, although every instrument is explained most minutely, the author strongly urges the necessity of some practical knowledge of their individual characteristics before attempting to use them in combination. "Even a little knowledge of the violin," he says, "will be of the greatest assistance to the composer of orchestral writing. If the student, too, can play nothing more than a scale on the flute, oboe, clarinet, or bassoon, it will be an advantage; while some acquaintance with the theory, if not with the practice, of the brass instruments will often save him from writing ineffectively for that important part of the orchestra." This is excellent advice, and well worth pondering by those whose ambition is apt to outstrip their knowledge; for we have within our own experience instances of even clever young musicians being placed in an awkward position amongst their fellow-students by having written passages which cannot by any possibility be played upon the instruments for which they were intended. As we have already said, the author of the work before us has the somewhat exceptional power of putting himself in the position of the pupil as well as the master; and this is especially shown in his chapter on stringed instruments, the most important, and certainly one of the best, in the book. Many authors, for example, tell us that double notes and extended chords can be played on the violin, and even furnish a list of the combinations which are capable of execution; but we have never before met with one who gives such conclusive reasons for some being easy, some more difficult, and others impossible, or who, in true sympathy with the performer as well as the composer, directs the attention of the student rather to what should be, than what may be, written. The short illustrations, too, in confirmation of the principles laid down in this chapter, are extremely happy, one great merit in the selection of these examples—and indeed in that of all throughout the book—being that, although the works of the most modern writers, Wagner more especially, are freely drawn upon, not only are extracts from the scores of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven given, but an earnest study of the manner in which these great masters use the various instruments strongly recommended. The description of the wind instruments merits the warmest praise, for, in addition to the explanation of their compass and resources, the weak points of each are carefully demonstrated. The transposing instruments—more particularly horns and clarinets—receive a large share of attention; and we are certain that any student of average intelligence, after attentively reading the pages devoted to this important subject, will become as perfectly acquainted with it as any book can make him. The quotations of horn passages from the standard scores are remarkably happy; and here it may be well to mention that in the extract from Auber's "Lestocq," in D minor, a B flat is placed at the signature of the horn part, an error which might perplex a beginner, especially as the author says that "the student will note here the manner in which the horn is used in a minor key." In the explanation of trumpets, trombones, and percussion instruments we have some very acute remarks both upon their use and abuse, it being truly observed, in speaking of trombones, that even Beethoven uses them very sparingly; a truth which we can, from our own knowledge, affirm is often ignored by adding them to some of the scores of this composer which can least bear so unwarrantable an intrusion. Examples taken from Schubert and Mendelssohn well illustrate the effect of trombones in *piano* passages, and mention is also made of the beautiful melody played by three trombones in unison in the first movement of Schubert's Symphony in C. One feature which should especially recommend this work to students is that, in addition to the lucid explanations of all the instruments used in a modern orchestra, the author particularly enlarges upon what may be termed the *genius* of each, and wisely cautions inexperienced composers against writing for one instrument what from its essential character belongs to another. The balance of tone, too, in combination is especially dwelt upon; and the arrangement of instrumentation when allied with voices is also a subject which occupies a large portion of the book, many excellent hints being here given, and illustrated by well-chosen quotations. It can scarcely be expected that in the short space at our disposal we can do more than indicate the salient points in Mr. Prout's Treatise; but we trust that we have