Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 20, No. 434 (Apr. 1, 1879), pp. 219-220

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3355625>

Accessed: 22-05-2016 12:09 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

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*

The four works by Schumann (Nos. 382-385) hardly require notice, so sure is the name of the composer to bring them under the immediate observation of amateurs. But a few words of description may not be uncalled for. No. 382, "Uncertain light," is written for a double chorus, in a bold and massive style. The words, admirably translated,—as are those of the companion pieces, save one, by the Rev. J. Troutbeck—are somewhat transcendental, but, on that account, they probably made a stronger appeal than usual to the composer, who has treated them in a very effective, though not especially original manner. No. 383, "Confidence," is also for a double choir, and, as compared with its predecessor, much more characteristic of Schumann. It is simple, nevertheless, and eminently worthy the attention of amateur societies who wish to increase their repertory. The subject of No. 384, "The dream," is both weird and vague,—qualities which Schumann has successfully avoided in his music. No. 385, "The boat," claims the attention due to a work of more importance. Written for four voices, with soli for soprano voice, flute, and horn, its construction is peculiar and extremely interesting. As the boat glides down a stream, first a hunter with his horn, then a resting traveller with his flute, and then a maiden with her voice join the music, producing an effect as fresh and original as it is charming. We commend this piece in the strongest terms as one certain to be received with enthusiasm.

In the one number from the "Orpheus" now before us we come upon Mr. Mackenzie again, and see him in merry mood. It can hardly be necessary to tell our readers what a *jeu d'esprit* is Mr. Barham's story of the Franklyn's Dogge. Its delightful inconsequence, leading nowhere with such minute attention to orthographical correctness by the way, is intensely droll, and calls for no ordinary power of humorous expression in the man who would set it to music. Mr. Mackenzie has not failed to meet its demands, and we regard the setting of the spelling exercise in each verse as equally funny with the words. Clearly the English sense of humour, so skilfully shown in our old catches and rounds, has not died out of the land.

Musical Theory: by John Curwen. Book III. Musical Form. [Tonic Sol-fa Agency.]

WHATEVER may be said for or against the merits of the Tonic Sol-fa movement—either as providing us with a permanent rational notation, or as merely a stepping-stone to the one now in use—there can be no question that it has led a large number of people to think much more truthfully upon music than they formerly did. The abolition of the "ladder system" certainly upsets many of our pre-conceived notions; but there is something in seeing what we hear—that the intervals of the scale are unvarying—and having once fairly got into the right road, it is not at all likely that we shall go back again. But Mr. Curwen, who avowedly inherits his system from Miss Glover, of Norwich, has also earned our thanks by circulating works not only to teach singing, but to teach music; and we are certain that the original founder of this method would be delighted could she see the practical results of her proposed reform. The book now before us is the last of three on "Musical Theory," and treats especially of "Form," an element in musical composition which it seems somewhat important we should keep before us in the present day. It is truly said, at the commencement of this work, that form consists in "the putting together of musical material—rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic—so as to produce in the mind a feeling that each part of the tone-picture belongs to the other parts and to the whole," what is aptly termed "incongruity" being illustrated by stringing together a number of familiar musical phrases good in themselves, but having no relation with each other. The remarks upon Sections, Phrases, Periods, Strains and Movements are extremely lucid; and much information may be gained by the student from a careful observation of the manner in which the various specimens given are built up. Respecting the essentials of "Musical Form," it is said that, no doubt, "the artist tried this plan and then the other, until he found something satisfactory both to himself and those about him. When he had found this, he naturally repeated it; and those who followed him imitated him. He had created a 'successful form.' There is no 'law of the Medes and

Persians' about it, but only the law which any *good piece of art* necessarily lays down for all future artists. They are bound to study it, and analyse it, and improve upon it as much as possible. Any one is at liberty to invent a *new* Musical Form. Musical Forms may, like fashions, 'come in' and 'go out' again. But those which have most of artistic truth and beauty in them will be welcome to all ages—will be lasting Musical Forms." Let us hope that the study of the works of all the great masters—not only in music, but in other arts—will prove to us that the general principles here laid down cannot be set aside with impunity, and the conscientious musical critics of the day may then be credited with the desire, not to enter a crusade against the construction of new forms, but against the abolition of all forms whatever. There are some terms used in this book which we think scarcely good for a student—for example, a sequence occurring in the air "O thou that tellest" is called a "contralto sequence," and the theme in divided octaves in Mozart's "Rondo alla Turca" (from his pianoforte Sonata in A major) is said to be with "doubled rhythm"—but, as a rule, wherever musical words are used in a different sense to their ordinary signification, the fact is fully stated, and reasons given for the alteration. Again, however, we must call attention to a matter which we feel cannot but impede the progress of this notation, at least with musicians: we mean the principle of regarding the minor as growing out, not of the *tonic*, but of the *relative*, major scale. We know that this has often been mentioned before; but when we see the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 49, No. 1—which is as much in the key of G as the last movement—headed thus, "Key of B $\flat$. *Lah* is G," there can be no doubt that thoroughly false notions must be engendered in the mind of a pupil upon the subject; for if, as in the Tune "Cannons" (also in the key of G minor), he is to believe that it "begins and ends in key B $\flat$, minor mode," what is he to think when he sees old music printed "in the key of G with the lesser third?" Surely this is a subject worthy the consideration of earnest Tonic Sol-faists; and that some little doubt on the matter may already have been felt, even by the originator of the movement, seems shadowed forth by the following observation at page 88: "It should, however, be mentioned that instrumental writers, like Beethoven, and even some modern vocal writers, regard the major and minor 'of the same Tonic' as the same key, and beginning a piece in one, they sometimes end it in the other." Unquestionably so, and the sooner this is acknowledged by all musicians the better; for certainly Beethoven would have been somewhat astonished had he been told that his Symphony in C minor is "in the key of E $\flat$, minor mode." At the conclusion of the book we have some questions on the method of parsing complete Forms, with reference to the paragraphs where all the points necessary for the purpose of analysing a composition are explained. The pronunciation of some Italian words, too, is tolerably well given; but we cannot believe that "Scherzo" can be represented by the letters "Skertzoa."

Sehnsucht (The Sunny South), with German and English words.

Frühlingsabend (Spring Evening), with German and English words.

Swallow Song. From "The Princess," by Alfred Tennyson.

Composed by Herbert S. Oakeley.
[Forsyth Brothers.]

THE original text of the first two of these songs, by Geibel, is translated by the composer, who has thoroughly caught the spirit, both in the words and music, of the German poet. We are glad, however, to find that Professor Oakeley has set the German, and not the English, verses, printing the translation in small letters underneath. The theme of "Sehnsucht," at first lightly accompanied, colours the words with much fidelity; and although the transition from E to C major comes somewhat abruptly upon the ear, when we are fairly in the key, both melody and harmony (presuming that the last quaver in the right-hand group, bar 17, page 5, should be E instead of D) flow on together in loving company. The almost unceasing semiquaver accompaniment in the second song gives it a thoroughly German character, the pianist indeed having an equal share

with the vocalist in the effect of the composition. Although undoubtedly the work of a skilled and refined musician, this song is somewhat more conventional than that already noticed. A Recitative is written to the song from "The Princess"—only intended to be sung when it is preceded by "Tears, idle tears," (also composed by Professor Oakeley)—and certainly this introduces the "Swallow Song" with good effect. There is much dramatic power shown in this piece, the varied shades of feeling being most sympathetically expressed in the music, which is throughout of a very high order. The *legato* bass, with the broken phrases of accompaniment for the right hand materially heighten the passionate portions of the song, which is certainly the best of the three under notice. A German translation of the poetry has been ably supplied by Fräulein von Valois; but certainly we should recommend that Tennyson's glowing words be adhered to wherever practicable.

Dixit Dominus. For Double Chorus, Solos, and Orchestra, in C major. Composed by Leonardo Leo. Edited from the autograph in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, by C. Villiers Stanford. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE fine opening chorus of this Psalm has previously been published by Messrs. Novello, both in the folio and octavo form; but the entire work now appears for the first time in this country; and, as far as we know, no other complete edition is in existence. The orchestration is for two oboes, two horns and strings, a very excellent transcription of which for the pianoforte has been made by the editor for the octavo edition now before us. The vigour with which the double choruses are written will surprise those who have but an imperfect knowledge of this composer; and a Quintett, "*Dominus a dextris*,"—in the score of which two oboes are added to the strings—contains many vocal passages extremely brilliant and effective. Mr. Villiers Stanford has added some metronome marks which represent to him the times intended for the several movements by the composer; but he modestly says that he does so "without any intention of interfering with the different tastes and opinions of different conductors." He has also corrected some evidently wrong notes; but always informs us as to how they stand in the autograph score.

Lead, kindly Light. Sacred Song, for Contralto. The words by Dr. J. H. Newman; set to music by C. Swinerton Heap, Mus. Doc. Cantab.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE smooth and placid character of Dr. Heap's music cannot but recommend it to vocalists who seek not after sensational points in compositions of a truly devotional nature; yet we, who calmly listen and think but of the song in relation to art, remain unmoved by its effect, even when the notes are breathed by the purest contralto voice, and their expression is regulated by the highest musical feeling. Something, then, must be wanting more than skilled workmanship can supply—more than a musician of the undoubted talent of Dr. Heap has thrown into his task—to enchain our attention and awaken that truly religious fervour which music, more than any other art, can evoke. The task of the reviewer is indeed a hard one when, with a song before him so tenderly voiced and so carefully harmonised, he feels it his duty to speak these truths; but compositions of this character are so rapidly multiplying—especially by earnest and even clever amateurs—that it is fully time to erect a higher standard; and it is artists like Dr. Heap that we hope to enlist as pioneers in the good cause. Let us, however, in justice to the composer of this song, award unqualified praise to the harmonies and accompaniments, which in many places give much interest to the somewhat conventional vocal theme, more especially from the part marked "a piacere" to the conclusion.

Eight Songs for Three Female Voices; with pianoforte accompaniment. By Ferdinand Hiller (Op. 176). English translation by Julia Goddard.

[Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

THE simple and melodious character of this set of three-part songs should recommend them to professional as well as amateur vocalists. It is perhaps scarcely fair to judge them in their English translations, for well as the meaning

of the words has been preserved, and carefully as the musical accent has been considered, it is absolutely impossible faithfully to reflect the original feeling of the composer—but three competent singers who can pronounce the German words as they should be pronounced in music are not always available; and it is certainly better to hear these graceful compositions sung to an English translation than not to hear them at all. We are inclined to give the preference to No. 2, "Expectation," No. 4, "When the bells are all ringing" (a really charming song), No. 6, "Cuckoo Song," and No. 8, "Play on." But we cordially invite the attention of all music-lovers to the entire collection of little gems; for there are merits in each which will amply repay study. Few difficulties will be encountered in the pianoforte part, but a refined and sympathetic touch is absolutely necessary for the due effect of the music. Germans, as a rule, think as much of the instrument as of the voice, even in their least pretentious vocal pieces; and it may be expected that so accomplished an artist as Ferdinand Hiller will at least do something more than allow his pianist merely to support the voices.

True Love (Treue Liebe). Song. The words translated from the German of E. Ferraud by Natalia Macfarren. The music composed by Willem Coenen.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE figure commenced in the symphony of this song is so happily preserved throughout the accompaniment of a large portion of the voice part as to lend additional interest to a melody in itself most attractive. A beautiful point, too, is where, after a prolonged pedal on the dominant of E minor, a sudden burst occurs in the tonic major, on the words, "Oh love, have I lost thee?" the effect of which is materially heightened by a passionate triplet accompaniment. The return to the original key and theme is well managed; and a good contrast is obtained by the long holding chords to the placid melody, most sympathetically expressive of the words, with which the song concludes. We cordially invite the attention of those in search of vocal pieces essentially melodious and original in character to this composition; and can assure them that, though unpretentious, as all really good songs are, it is the finished work of a refined and accomplished artist.

Mendelssohn's Original Compositions for Pianoforte Solo. Complete Edition in Five Volumes. Vol. V.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE publication of the whole of Mendelssohn's compositions for pianoforte solo in an octavo edition, complete in five volumes, will do much towards popularising these works, and enable many to make a valuable addition to their musical library at a small cost. The fifth volume, just issued, contains Three Preludes, Three Studies, Two Sonatas, Album Blatt, Capriccio, and Perpetuum Mobile. Most of these pieces are comparatively little known; but there can be little doubt that they will now shortly make their way; for although of course unequal in merit, they are all instinct with that charming individuality which stamps even the most trifling sketches of their composer. The Album Blatt, in E minor and major, is a perfect gem, and thoroughly worthy of being ranked with the best of the "*Lieder ohne Worte*."

The Morning and Evening Service, together with the Office of Holy Communion, set to music in the key of D. Certain portions of the Office of Holy Communion, intended for Supplemental Use with other Services. By Charles E. Miller. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS service will require the resources of a large and well-trained choir to perform it with effect. We can scarcely say whether Mr. Miller sometimes purposely breaks well-known rules of harmony or not, but certain it is that the judgment of an experienced master would save him not only from occasional errors of correct taste, but may suggest to him in many cases that he has most certainly and of course most inadvertently transcribed phrases which, though excellent in themselves, are considered the special characteristics of other musicians. We must not be misunderstood, however: notwithstanding the above criticism, there is most undoubtedly much to be admired in this service, especially in the "*Gloria in Excelsis*," which contains excellent points.