Review

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Stray Leaves. An Album of Pianoforte Pieces. Twelve little Sketches for the Piano. Composed by Florian Pascal. [Joseph Williams.]

It is not to be wondered at that in a volume containing sixteen pieces, there should be much inequality of merit; but we may unhesitatingly recommend many of them to the attention of pianists, and almost regret that they should not have been published separately, so that purchasers could choose from them. From the "Pensées Celtiques" we should be inclined to select No. 2 (Berceuse); from the "Idyls" No. 1; and from the "Vignettes" Nos. 1, 4 and 6. Many of the other sketches, however, are exceedingly well written, and all lie well under the hand of a trained pianist. The "Air with Variations" displays much contrapuntal knowledge, the fugue especially being carefully considered and fairly wrought out, and the "Air Espagnol" has also many good points. "Stray Leaves" appeals to younger players, and will be found extremely useful for teaching purposes, as, although simple in construction, the pieces shadow forth the style of the classical writers. We think it rather a merit that names should not be given to each number. The listeners may supply them if they please; but it is infinitely better that a composition should rest on its own merits, if it have any—and if not, we much question whether it will acquire additional value by having some ultra-sentimental title. We particularly admire Nos. 1, 5, and 8 (which contain useful practice for the two hands), and No. 10. No. 11 is quaint, but perhaps more curious than pleasing, the pertinacious ignoring of the leading-note, especially at the conclusion, being perhaps hardly an example to set before juvenile pianists.

O Salutaris Hostia. Sacred Song.

Evening Shades. Song. Words by Fred. H. Houston. Composed by William H. Flood. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

It may be perhaps difficult to describe the difference between a sacred and a secular song, but there can be no doubt that the difference is felt, even by musically uneducated listeners. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" is one of the most purely religious vocal pieces ever written; but, as in all other songs, it may be only that the words are so sympathetically coloured by the genius of the composer as to become doubly eloquent; and when, therefore, this happy union is not effected, the result is disappointing. In both the songs before us Mr. Flood has written an agreeable, flowing melody, and the accompaniments throughout are thoroughly satisfactory; but the words of either of the two compositions might be exchanged for those of the other without anybody but the composer discovering the alteration. The "O Salutaris" is essentially a ballad—and a very pleasing one too—but, as we have said, except for the words, there is nothing to show that it is, as the title-page tells us, a "Sacred Song." "Evening Shades" is a melodious and vocal Song, and may be recommended to unambitious singers in search of novelty. The enharmonic change at page 3 begins well, but we scarcely like the manner in which the original key is returned to.

Danse Pyrrhique. For the Pianoforte. By Brownlow Baker. [Duncan Davison and Co.]

THERE is much character in this little sketch, which may be conscientiously recommended to young players who love to practise music with what they term a "decided tune" in it. The pedal point after the double bar has a good effect, and contrasts well with the principal subject. "Teaching pieces," however, should be correct, and it is kindness, therefore, to point out some errors. In the last bar but one on page 4, the G in the last chord, treble staff, should have a flat before it; in the following bar, the second crotchet in the bass should be F. In the first bar of the last line, page 5, the last crotchet in the bass should be D; there is an evident confusion in the bass of the last bar but one, and the final chord has the low D, instead of F, in the bass. No doubt practised performers would see all these things at once; but children would not, and it is of the utmost importance that they should not read inaccuracies which must afterwards be corrected.

A Children's Opera. A Fairy Wedding. Composed in Six Parts, for the Pianoforte. By Cotsford Dick. [Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

AN Opera for the Pianoforte is certainly a novelty; but at our holiday parties we are not disposed to be over-critical, and the juvenile performers and audiences for whom Mr. Cotsford Dick's musical contribution is expressly designed will assuredly thank him for his kindly sympathy with their requirements. The Overture is a pleasing little movement, and the "Bridegroom's Serenade" and "Bridesmaids' Chorus," have sufficient fairy-like character to justify their admission amongst the elfin revels appropriate to the occasion. The "Wedding March" is scarcely so attractive as its companion pieces, and moreover contains some few harsh effects—as, for example, in the harmony of the second bar on page 9—which we think better avoided in music written for children. "The Betrothal" (which, by the way, comes strangely after the "Wedding March") has a good subject in A minor, with an effective change into the tonic major; and the characteristic "Dance" which finishes the story is both melodious and graceful. The little book has a well-designed cover; and it is announced that the pieces can be procured separately.

The Sailor's Home. Ballad.

[Glasgow: Finlayson Brothers.]

The Last Leaf (Grandmamma's Song). Words by J. Sheridan Murphy. Music by P. Von Tugginer. [Marriott and Williams.]

THE name of this composer is new to us, but his songs, although eccentric both in melody and harmony, have a definite character. He has an evident love for somewhat peculiar intervals—the augmented fourth, for example, being especially dwelt upon in the first song, which, however, excepting some harsh harmonies in the second bar of the symphony, has decided merit. "The Last Leaf" is clever, some rather mournful verses being well reflected in the music. The old lady of ninety-six, however, who is dramatically presumed to be the vocalist, must have well preserved her voice to be able to reach the F sharp at the conclusion of the song, especially as the composer has been cruel enough to place a pause over it.

A Fairy Tale. For the Pianoforte. By Berthold Tours. [Weekes and Co.]

JUDGING by the specimen before us, we may assume that Mr. Tours has a special talent for the composition of characteristic pieces for the young. But it is well that "fairy tales" appeal also to children of a larger growth, for it would be indeed a pity if so elegant and musician-like a sketch as this should be heard only under the fingers of very youthful pianists, as—apart from the fact of nursery concerts being often attended by somewhat uneducated listeners—the true meaning of the composition can scarcely be revealed save by tolerably well-trained students. The principal theme is extremely melodious, and the passages lie well under the hand throughout. We conscientiously recommend this artistic trifle both to students and teachers, and shall be glad if Mr. Tours can manage to continue his labours in the same direction.

Mother, oh, sing me to rest. Song. Words by Mrs. Hemans. Composed by W. H. Harper. [Marriott and Williams.]

It is gratifying to find that composers who devote themselves to writing songs especially intended for amateur vocalists are beginning to see the policy of selecting their poetry from the works of poets. Mr. Harper has aimed merely at producing a simple ballad, and we are bound to say has been successful; yet we cannot but think that Mrs. Hemans's verses have partially contributed to this result. Maudlin words will assuredly produce maudlin music, and the union of the two is insufferable to educated listeners; but when the composer has but little to say, and the poet says something for him, the infliction of the work upon an audience must at least be partially lessened. The song under notice is extremely melodious, and the harmonies natural and musicianlike throughout.