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Review

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Church and Organ Music.

EDINBURGH SOCIETY OF ORGANISTS.

On May 29, at St. Mary's Cathedral, a very fine organ recital was given by Mr. T. H. Collinson, organist of the Cathedral and president of the Society. Mr. Collinson prefaced his recital with a short account of the Cathedral organ, a notable example of Father Willis's work built in 1879, with the enhancement of electro-pneumatic action and detached console, including 'double-touch' couplers, by the Hope-Jones Organ Company in 1897. The programme—the items of which had been selected by plebiscite—was one of exceptional interest, and the performance throughout was masterly in the highest degree. The following were the items selected by the Society: Prelude and Fugue (St. Anne's), Bach; first Organ Concerto, Handel; Marche Funèbre et Chant Séraphique, Guilmant; Intermezzo, Hollins; Sonata No. 6, Mendelssohn; Dithyramb, Harwood; Finale from Symphony Pathétique, Tchaikovsky; 'Parsifal' Vorspiel, Wagner.

National hymn-music is a feature of the open-air Processions and Intercession services arranged by the Church League for Women's Suffrage, the last of which takes place on July 8. The choir is under the direction of Mr. Martin Shaw, and Miss Rosabel Watson's orchestra is responsible for the accompaniments, besides playing an arrangement of Tallis's fine 'Third Mode Melody.' It is good that the man on the pavement should make acquaintance with such splendid national tunes as 'St. Patrick's Breastplate,' 'Martyrs,' 'Rhuddlan,' 'King's Lynn,' and others in the programme.

A correspondence about a recent performance of Stainer's 'Crucifixion' at East Retford has been sent to us. It is not important, but it illustrates aptly the folly of would-be critics who evidently do not know the elements of the subject about which they venture to write. The offender scornfully confesses that he does not understand what is meant by 'balance and blend' in quartet singing!

Mr. T. H. W. Armstrong has been elected to the Holroyd Music Scholarship (value £100 a year) at Keble College, Oxford. He was educated at H.M. Chapel Royal and the King's School, Peterborough. He was recently appointed assistant organist of Peterborough Cathedral, and is a pupil of Dr. Haydn Keeton.

Mr. A. G. Johnston, who was for twelve years organist and choirmaster of St. Mary's Church, Dublin, has recently been ordained for the curacy of St. Ann's Cathedral, Belfast. On June 14 he was the recipient of a valuable presentation from St. Mary's.

A new unaccompanied Mass for eight voices, composed by Sir George Henschel, was sung for the first time on June 1 at All Saints', Margaret Street. The style is modern and chromatic, and the music is difficult. But it is impressive and devotional.

The late Mr. E. C. Austen, an Eton master, who died on April 3, left £2,000 to King's College, Cambridge, for the maintenance of the chapel service.

ORGAN RECITALS.

- Mr. Albert Orton, at Walton Parish Church—Prelude in D flat, *Chopin*; March (Op. 71) and Finale, 'Pathetic Symphony,' *Tchaikovsky*.
 Mr. Fred Gostelow, at Selfridge's (two recitals)—March, 'Pomp and Circumstance' (No. 1), *Elgar*; Choral Song and Fugue, *Wesley*; Toccata and Fugue in D minor, *Bach*; Overture 'Egmont,' Scherzo Symphonique, *Guilmant*.
 Mr. A. E. H. Nickson, at St. Peter's, Melbourne—Good Friday music from 'Parsifal,' and 'Seven Words from the Cross,' *Otto Mallinger*.
 Mr. Frederick Richens, at First United Evangelical Church, Lock Haven, Pa., U.S.A. (opening of new organ)—Allegro Appassionata (Sonata No. 5), *Guilmant*; Canzona, *Wheeldon*; Romance in D flat, *Lemare*; Concert Overture in E flat, *Faulkes*.

Mr. F. G. M. Ogbourne, at St. John's, Red Lion Square—Theme and Variations in A, *Hesse*; Air and Variations, *W. T. Best*; Toccata and Fugue in D minor, *Bach*.

Mr. Herbert Hodge, at St. Nicholas Cole Abbey (three recitals)—Marche aux Flambeaux, *Guilmant*; Scherzo (Sonata No. 8), *Rheinberger*; March, *Spohr*; Overture, 'Occasional Oratorio'; Prelude and Fugue in A minor, *Bach*.

Mr. James Gray, at Dysart Parish Church—Benediction Nuptiale, *Saint-Saëns*; Overture, 'Samson'; Prelude and Fugue in D, *Bach*.

Mr. E. H. Sidebotham, at St. George's, Worthing (two recitals)—Prelude on 'Rockingham,' *Parry*; Sonata, No. 1, *Mendelssohn*; Toccata and Fugue in D minor and Fugue in E flat, *Bach*; Concerto in F, *Handel*; Ave Maria, *Arcadelt-Liszt*.

Mr. E. Roberts West, at St. Nicholas, Warwick (two recitals)—Overture in G, *Lyons*; Fantasia, *R. P. Stewart*; Overture in C minor, *Hollins*; Sursum Corda, *Elgar*.

Mr. R. Woodthorpe Browne, at St. Catherine's, Hatcham—Allegro from Sonata, *Elgar*; Barcarolle, *Sternedale Bennett*; Triumphal March, *Hollins*; 'Ite Missa Est,' *Lenmens*.

Miss Elaine Rainbow, at Queen's Hall—Minuet, *Tours*; 'Le Carillon,' *Wolstenholme*; Prelude in C sharp minor, *Rachmaninov*.

Mr. Frederick J. Tarris, at All Hallows, Bromley-by-Bow—Marche Solennelle, *Mailly*; Postlude and Minuet, *Stuart Archer*.

Mr. H. F. Ellingford, at Old Meeting Church, Birmingham—Sonata No. 1, *Mendelssohn*; Finale from Sonata, *Reubke*; Air varied, *Thomas Adams*; 'Autumn,' *Lyons*.

Mr. John E. Moore, at Shipley Parish Church—Fantasy Prelude, *Macpherson*; Elegy, *Bairstow*; Sonata, *Elgar*; 'Dithyramb,' *Harwood*; Capriccio, *Ireland*.

Mr. C. E. Blyton Dobson, at Central Mission, Nottingham (three recitals)—Caprice Orientale, *Lemare*; March on a theme of Handel, *Guilmant*; Canzona, *Wheeldon*; Overture in G, *Lyons*.

Mr. W. Lynwood Farnam, at Emmanuel Church, Boston (two recitals)—Cantabile, *Frank*; third Symphony, *Vierne*; Minuet, *Gigout*; (Bach recital)—three Choral Preludes, Toccata in C, Largo from fifth Violin Sonata, and Prelude to 'God's time is the best' (arranged for violin, harp, and organ), Trio-Sonata No. 1, Prelude and Fugue in G minor.

Miss E. D. Tuck, at Highcliffe Church, Hants—Grand Chœur in D, *Guilmant*; Cantilène from Sonata in D minor, *Rheinberger*; Toccata and Fugue in D minor, *Bach*; Intermezzo from Symphony No. 1, *Widor*.

APPOINTMENTS.

- Mr. George Adams, late organist of All Saints' Church, Langport, to St. John's Church, Bovey Tracey, S. Devon.
 Mr. A. E. H. Nickson, of St. Peter's, Melbourne, organist and choirmaster to St. John's, Toorak.
 Mr. F. J. Nott, organist and choirmaster to St. Peter's, Melbourne.

Reviews.

The Organ Works of John Sebastian Bach. Book XV. The Little Organ Book. Edited by Ivor Atkins, with an introduction by Ernest Newman.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

M. Widor, in his preface to Schweitzer's 'J. S. Bach,' speaking of the Chorale Preludes, mentions the difficulty he had in understanding certain passages. He felt that on one page Bach was writing absolute music, and on the next appeared to be expressing something in the nature of a programme. Asking Schweitzer how one was to know what idea lay behind such passages, he was told that a knowledge of the words of the hymns would make all clear.

Many an English organist must have found himself in the same difficulty. He was probably well aware of the beauty of the Preludes, but yet felt that somehow he had not got at the true inwardness of the music. How could he, without a key? In many cases the chorale melody was so hidden by arabesques as to be all but indistinguishable, and generally there was no more than a German title to help the player to get at the idea that seemed to be at the back of the music.

There can be no greater testimony to the intrinsic beauty of these works of Bach than the fact that in spite of this ignorance of the melodies and the texts from which the Preludes usually derive their poetic bases, many of our organists have long since placed them among music which, by reason of a rare combination of technical finish, expressiveness, and intimate nature, is for the most part outside the sphere of criticism. The growth of this appreciation of the Chorale Preludes will receive a decided impetus from the new Edition which Messrs. Novello are bringing out, the first volume of which lies before us.

It may be said at once that it is exactly what English organists have required, but have so far been unable to obtain, either at home or from abroad,—a carefully edited version of the Preludes, with each number preceded by the chorale melody which it treats, and a verse of the hymn to which it was most frequently sung, the text being given in German and English. The harmonization of the melodies in all but a few cases is by Bach, and is chiefly from the Cantatas. The translations are from standard sources, the majority being from the pen of Caroline Winckworth. There are also some quaint specimens from 'Gude and Godly Ballates' (1568) and Bishop Coverdale's 'Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songes' of about the same date, while the Rev. G. R. Woodward's valuable collection, 'Songs of Syon,' has of course been drawn on. The editor, save in one instance, has adopted the Bach Society version of the music, and retains also Bach's grouping of the notes, even though this is at times contrary to modern custom. There is much in his contention that the original grouping often serves as a valuable clue to the phrasing. In the absence of authoritative slurring, it certainly seems advisable to hold fast to anything which may take its place. Most organists, too, will agree with Mr. Atkins that 'these little Preludes should be printed without the customary network of phrase-marks.' What have some of us not suffered from certain German editions, wherein the editor, with Teutonic thoroughness, has divided and sub-divided the phrases, with slurs within slurs, and dots cast round as if from a pepper-pot! After all, the Preludes are mostly constructed on short figures, the phrasing of which is obvious. Mr. Atkins has therefore contented himself with a dot to signify the release of the finger at the end of a phrase, or a short upright line in cases where the break should be more pronounced, and a comma at the end of each line of the choral in certain cases where the player might be likely unintentionally to tie the final note. He has also retained the old use of the pause in this connection. The registration suggested is invariably excellent, and the editor has done well to point out in his prefatory remarks on the subject, that many of the Preludes sound equally well loud or soft, and lend themselves to great variety of treatment. In this, as in other respects, Mr. Atkins is particularly to be commended for not having unduly dotted the 'i's' and crossed the 't's.' Bach has suffered a good deal from over-editing.

Mr. Ernest Newman contributes a long Introduction which is an important addition to the literature of the subject. It is in three parts, the first being historical, the second dealing with the various forms used by Bach, and the third with the poetical, pictorial, and symbolical side of the works. We note, by the by, a slight difference between him and the editor on a small point. Mr. Newman says that 'for a full understanding of the Preludes, it is necessary to be acquainted not only with the chorale melody and Bach's form, but with *the whole* of the words of the hymns.' (The italics are his.) Mr. Atkins admits that 'the ideal course would have been to have given the hymns in their entirety,' but says that this course was impossible owing to the great length of some of them. 'Fortunately, however,' he goes on, 'as with English hymns, the first verse gives a very fair idea of the drift of the hymn.' As Mr. Newman quotes some striking instances of the first verse being misleading, it seems a pity that a compromise was not effected in such cases by printing the verses that mattered most.

Mr. Newman does not dwell unduly on the pictorial side of the Preludes. He draws attention to a few of the more striking examples, and refers the reader to the pages of Schweitzer and Pirro for fuller particulars.

It may be questioned whether this feature of the Chorale Preludes was so much lost sight of by Spitta or Mosewius as is generally supposed. Mr. Newman says that Spitta 'was

unable or unwilling to see many illustrations of it that are patent enough to us,' and that Mosewius, 'though insisting strongly on it, . . . failed to see that what was true of the vocal music was true of the instrumental works also.' It may be suggested that Spitta did not dwell on the point because it was too obvious (even for him), and that Mosewius drew attention to the tone-painting in the vocal works because its presence there was somewhat of an innovation, whereas in the organ works it was a convention. Mr. Newman quotes Ziegler, one of Bach's pupils, as saying that 'his master always urged on him the importance of playing the Chorales not merely as music but "according to the tenor of the words."'

Many of Bach's predecessors and contemporaries wrote Chorale Preludes in which the tone-painting is as obvious as that of John Sebastian himself. In his Prelude on 'Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schaar,' and in certain settings of 'Vom Himmel hoch,' Bach employs scale-passages to depict the angelic flights. Buttstedt (1666-1727) uses the same material in dealing with the subject,—indeed, the opening and closing passages of his Prelude on 'Vom Himmel kam' is perhaps more successful pictorially than Bach's. Hanff (1630-1706), Lubeck (1654-1740), Tunder (1614-67), Walther (1684-1748), and others, wrote Preludes in which attempts to illustrate the words are obvious, and sometimes surprisingly successful. Occasionally they wrote sets of Variations dealing with the sentiments of the verses in order. Even Pachelbel at times forsook the somewhat mechanical form that bears his name, and became descriptive. (See, as perhaps the best example, his delicious little piece on 'Vom Himmel hoch,' wherein he treats the pastoral side of Christmas.)

John Caspar Vogler (1697-1765) wrote a long Prelude on the Passion Chorale, 'Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod,' which in idiom, richness of arabesque, and intensity of expression, recalls so strongly Bach's 'O Mensch, bewein,' that it is actually included in some editions of Bach, and ascribed to him. We mention these examples, because it seems to us that there is a tendency to regard Bach as having done something new in writing tone-pictures, whereas he merely did better what others had done before him. But after all, the tone-painting is a detail that may be—and often is—too much insisted on, with the result that occasionally the music is regarded as describing physical rather than psychical states. It is as examples of intimate expressions of moods that these pieces make their final and lasting appeal. On this aspect of them we cannot do better than quote the words with which Mr. Newman ends his Introduction:

'It is along the converging lines of the poetry and the music of these Preludes that the reverent student of them will work. The closer his familiarity with them, the more he will be amazed both at the emotional heights and depths of this great nature and at the incomparable skill and resource of the musician. "With this key," said Wordsworth of the sonnet, "Shakespeare unlocked his heart." The Chorale Preludes are the key to the very heart of Bach. If everything else of his were lost, from them we could reconstruct him in all his pathos and almost all his grandeur.'

We believe that this edition, from a musical and literary point of view, as well as on account of its convenient arrangement and comprehensive nature, will be regarded as one of the most valuable contributions to the organists' library that have appeared for some years.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Handel, Canons, and the Duke of Chandos. By R. A. Streetfeild. Pamphlet, Pp. 33. Price 6d. (Charles Whittingham & Co., Chiswick.)

The Story of the Symphony. By E. Markham Lee. The Music Story Series. Pp. 239. Price 3s. 6d. net. (The Walter Scott Co.)

The Russian Arts. By Rosa Newmarch. Pp. 293. Price 5s. net. (Herbert Jenkins, Ltd.) Deals ably with the development of Art (except Music, which Mrs. Newmarch has elsewhere dealt with) in Russia.