Review

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The morning stars sang together. By Geo. Alex. A. West.
[Novello and Company, Limited.]

Christmas is coming, and although there exists a splendid store of standard anthems to draw upon, a new composition always has the effect of stirring the interest of a choir. Mr. G. A. A. West is one of the rapidly increasing number of American composers whose productions are deservedly gaining favour in the old country. He writes in a manner giving proof of his talent and musicianship. The text, taken from the Old Testament, is applicable to Christmastide, and is also suitable to other seasons. The anthem opens with a chorus of firm and majestic character containing some effective contrapuntal writing. It is succeeded by a soprano solo of jubilant expression, which leads into a second chorus terminating with the announcement by the basses of a manly subject treated fugally until the exposition has been finished. Thereupon a fine effect is obtained by the full choir giving out the fugue subject in unison *fortissimo*; the anthem shortly after comes to an imposing conclusion.

How we hear: a treatise on Sound. By Frederick Charles Baker. [The Vincent Music Company.]

This little book gives popular explanations of the phenomena of sound, and is not burdened by mathematics. We are afraid that students would not be able to pass examinations by its aid, but every intelligent person, and especially musicians, should know the facts underlying musical art that are so clearly discussed by Mr. Baker. For our own part we should have been glad if the psychological section of the work had been more definitely treated. The evolution of the scale and the attitude of the mind in listening to music are passed over, but the transcendental is dwelt upon with great eloquence.

Magnificat and Nunc dimittis. Set to music in the key of E flat by G. F. Huntley; in A and D by Ivor Atkins; and in B flat by J. Christopher Marks.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

These settings of the favourite evening canticles merit the attention of choirmasters by the earnestness of the writing and the scope of the design. Dr. Huntley's *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* was composed for the thirtieth annual Festival of the London Church Choir Association, held this year in St. Paul's Cathedral. The composer does not hesitate to write high G's for the sopranos, and in two instances carries them to A flat, but the high notes are well led up to, and the part-writing, by its studied avoidance of awkward intervals, is easy to read. The second half of the *Gloria* to both canticles is set to a fugue subject, while the first verse of the *Nunc dimittis* is assigned to tenors and basses in unison, and the full choir does not come in until the third verse, a treatment of the words which is highly effective.

Mr. Ivor Atkins's music was written for the special Sunday Service preceding the recent Hereford Festival, and has already been very favourably criticised. There is good reason for this favourable reception, as the esteemed organist of Worcester Cathedral has written with modern feeling, while preserving the best features of English church music. The vocal parts are divided in sundry passages demanding special emphasis, but although this necessitates a fairly numerous choir it does not increase the difficulties of the execution, the intervals being chiefly diatonic in character. In the organ accompaniment the composer has allowed himself more freedom, with brilliant results.

The setting by Mr. Marks, if less ambitious and distinctive than the foregoing, possesses a sincerity of expression and a certain deftness in the vocal part writing which command esteem. The ingenuity displayed at the verse 'And His mercy is on them' is noteworthy, and the soprano solo 'He remembering His mercy' is graceful and devout. The opening line of the *Nunc dimittis* is intended to be sung by the tenor

soloist and repeated by a quartet, the full choir entering at the words 'For mine eyes have seen.' An effective harmonic transition is made at the announcement 'To be a Light,' the imposing character of the passage being amplified by a series of *sforzando* chords on the organ at the weak beats of the bar.

Funeral March, from 'Grania and Diarmid.' By Edward Elgar.

Three Dances. By Frank E. Tours.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

The 'Funeral March' was written by Dr. Elgar for the production in October, 1901, at Dublin, by the Irish Literary Society, of Messrs. W. B. Yeates and George Moore's drama 'Grania and Diarmid.' Those who perform the pianoforte arrangement under notice may be interested in knowing that in the play the march follows the death of *Diarmid*, who has been fatally wounded in a boar hunt and dies in the presence of his wife and her lover. The first subject of the march is cast in the *Æolian* mode. There soon appears the figure connected with the personality of *Diarmid*, 'a soldier and a hero, but more a vacillating Hamlet than a Siegfried or a Coriolanus.' The tenor part of bars eight and nine contains *Diarmid's* horn call. The melody of the trio, which commences at bar three on page three, is typical of Dr. Elgar's individuality, and consists, it will be observed, of nine bars. The music is imbued with deep feeling, consonant with the pathetic incident in the drama which these solemn strains so appropriately illustrate.

Mr. Frank E. Tours is the son of the late Berthold Tours, and so it is not difficult to trace from whence he acquires his musical gifts. It says much for his talent that the 'Three Dances' possess distinctiveness. No. 1 is an *Allegretto* of sprightly character; No. 2 is of a kind languorous, and suggestive of posturing and grace; and No. 3 is as merry as a marriage-bell. The pieces will not be found difficult to pianists, although the last-named requires a nimble finger to do it justice.

THE HOVINGHAM FESTIVAL.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

To thoroughly appreciate the 'true inwardness' of the Hovingham Musical Festivals it is necessary to know something of the place and of the men who made the Festival possible. At first sight Hovingham would seem a more unlikely situation for the establishment of a musical Festival than even Bayreuth. Like that town, it is on a branch line of railway along which only the slowest of 'stopping' trains meander at infrequent intervals, and in the heart of a purely agricultural district. The nearest places of greater size than a village are the small market-towns of Malton and Thirsk, about half-way between which Hovingham is situated. The place itself is but a village, yet it has had a certain distinction among villages, even before the establishment of a musical Festival gave it an additional status in the eyes of at least the artistic world. It is officially styled 'Hovingham Spa,' and though I do not know that its reputation as a watering-place is maintained up to this day, it is certainly regarded as a pleasant resort by many who seek the repose afforded by a beautiful and peaceful country. Among what a guide-book would classify as 'attractions' are the Abbeys of Rievaulx and Byland, the Castles of Helmsley and Gilling, Coxwold with its memories of Sterne, and Castle Howard, most sumptuous of noblemen's palaces. But all this would not suffice to account for the choice of Hovingham as the locality for a Festival which demands both an audience and a concert-hall to contain it. It required the eye of a far-seeing faith to discern a possible audience when the first of these Festivals was planned some fifteen years ago or more; but the hall existed, and indeed suggested the possibility of the Festival. The Squires of Hovingham have been for many generations