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REVIEWS.

Denkmäler der Tonkunst.

The Oratorios of Carissimi. Edited by F. Chrysander. Vol. I., containing Latin Oratorios.

The Works of Corelli. Edited by J. Joachim. Vol. I., forty-eight Violin Sonatas.

The Works of Couperin. Edited by J. Brahms. Vol. I., pièces pour le Clavecin.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

PERHAPS the most encouraging feature in the musical activity of the present epoch is the vast extent covered by the workers in the art. Whilst some are busily engaged in discovering fresh points of departure, others evince equal zeal in reopening the treasures buried beneath the accumulated weight of centuries. If attention were exclusively devoted to either branch of artistic enterprise, there would be ample ground for anxiety; but so long as the movement towards increased intellectuality goes hand in hand with enlightened veneration for the past, it is possible to maintain a feeling of complacency towards the harmonious influences thus labouring simultaneously in the cause of true progress. Among those who have devoted their lives to the task of rehabilitating the masters of former ages with the glory which should be their due, Dr. Friedrich Chrysander holds a foremost place. His fervid admiration of Handel, and the splendid monument he is raising in the German Society's edition of Handel's works, of which he is the editor, are sufficiently well known to musicians. It is equally understood that his sympathies extend backwards rather than forwards from the time of the Saxon composer, and hence we may consider the publication of the volumes named above as a labour of love to a musician so conservative in his tendencies. As regards the first in the order named, Dr. Chrysander merits hearty thanks for directing attention to the works of one who certainly should not live only in the estimation of the few possessing extensive musical libraries. Giacomo Carissimi flourished nearly a century prior to Handel and Bach, but much of his music would be found effective in the concert-room even at the present day. It is lamentable that an immense quantity was destroyed at the period of the Jesuit persecutions, but enough remains in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, in the library of Christ Church, Oxford, and elsewhere, to enable us to estimate the genius of Carissimi at its correct value. It will be remembered that the oratorio, "Jonas," was revived by Mr. Henry Leslie some years ago, but the event created no interest outside a narrow circle of musicians. The present volume contains four Latin oratorios, namely, "Jephthe," "Judicium Salomonis," "Jonas," and "Baltazar." These works are similar in structure, though differing somewhat in points of detail. The narrative is allotted to a solo voice in each, while the *dramatis personæ* speak by means of the remaining soloists and the chorus. The accompaniments are never in more than four parts, and in the "Jephthe" consist of a simple unfigured bass or *continuo*. The choral portions are extremely simple in structure, though in "Jonas" a double choir is employed, at first antiphonally and afterwards in eight real parts. The solos are written in a kind of semi-rhythmical recitative, and it is here that the genius of Carissimi is most fully displayed. So far from being dry and monotonous, these recitatives are remarkable for their dramatic feeling and appropriateness to the text, as well as for the essentially modern character of the harmonic progressions. This yearning towards true expression was a novel feature in sixteenth century music, and herein Carissimi showed himself an Italian of the Italians, leaving behind mere scientific pedantry, and indicating the more noble mission and power of the art as a means of portraying the various shades of emotion. But it must not be inferred from these remarks that the choruses in these oratorios are deficient in beauty or force. As an instance of the breadth and dignity to which the composer could attain, mention may be made of the final chorus in "Jephthe," "Plorate filii, Israel," which Handel has adopted as the basis of his "Hear, Jacob's God," in "Samson." The closing number of "Jonas," "Peccavimus, Domine," is also very massive in effect. It is surely not unreasonable to assume that either the Bach Choir or

the Cambridge University Musical Society will at no distant date indulge musicians with a hearing of one of Carissimi's sacred works. Their simplicity and brevity are qualities which should plead strongly in their favour.

Of the claims of Arcangelo Corelli it would be a work of supererogation to speak at length. Violinists recognise in him one who materially advanced the importance and capabilities of their instrument, while musicians in general admire the elegance of his style and the mingled purity and dignity of his melody. The present volume contains four sets of twelve sonatas for strings, of which the original titles are as follows: "Sonate da Chiesa a tre, due Violini e Violone, o Arcileuto, col Basso per l'Organo, Opera Prima, in Roma 1683." "Sonate da Camera a tre, due Violini e Violone, o Cembalo, Opera Seconda, in Roma 1685." "Sonate da Chiesa a tre, due Violini e Violone, o Arcileuto, col Basso per l'Organo, Opera Terza, in Modena 1689." "Sonate da Camera a tre, due Violini e Violone, o Cembalo, Opera Quarta, in Bologna 1694." Each sonata, whether for church or chamber, consists of three or four movements. In the chamber works the old dance forms are used, but in the so-called church sonatas the movements are more freely developed, and the resources of counterpoint brought into play. On the whole, therefore, these last are more interesting, and the introduction of one or more of them, say at the Monday Popular Concerts, would be deemed by many a commendable departure from the ordinary groove. There remains another set of twelve sonatas for violin, 1700, and these, with the concerti grossi, 1712, will doubtless form the second volume of Herr Joachim's edition.

François Couperin was born in 1668, fifteen years later than Corelli, and died in 1733, twenty years after the Italian master. As Corelli devoted himself chiefly to the violin, so Couperin is to be held in remembrance for his contributions to the clavecin. The two composers may therefore stand side by side in the temple of fame. The influence of Couperin may be very distinctly traced in many of the dance movements which are to be found in the suites for clavichord of J. S. Bach, both as regards the rhythm and the embellishments. According to Fétis, however, his sobriquet "le grand" was given to him by reason of his superior skill as an organist; but he never published any compositions for the organ. There are four books of suites for clavecin, of which two are included in the volume before us. The first book contains five, and the second seven, suites or "ordres," as they are entitled by the composer. No drawing-room piano music of the present day ever received more fantastic or unmeaning titles than those given by Couperin to the several movements of these works. This throws some light on the taste of the Parisian public in the early part of the eighteenth century. At the end of this volume Herr Brahms has wisely afforded an explanation of the various ornaments or "agrémens" with which the music of Couperin abounds. The gratitude of musicians is due to Dr. Chrysander for the publication of these "Memorials," and the progress of the series will be watched with interest.

Ode to the North-East Wind. Poetry by the Rev. Charles Kingsley. The Music composed for Chorus and Orchestra by Alice Mary Smith (Mrs. Meadows White).

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

CANTATAS graceful and musicianlike, but with no claim beyond a passing mark of recognition, are so plentiful in the present day that it is quite refreshing to have a composition of this class brought before our notice so replete with true poetical feeling, and so artistically and appropriately treated throughout as to earn a name for its composer, even had this honour not been already gained by previous works. In this case, however, we have only to record that the well-known creative talent of an artist, whom we still delight to call Alice Mary Smith, has been displayed to more than usual advantage in the Cantata before us; for, although simply constructed, it cannot but win its way to a high position, both by the beauty of its themes and the perfection of its workmanship. The opening chorus, in E minor and major, effectively prepares the hearer for the character of the work, the "Wild North-Easter" being well represented in the commencement by the minor subject, and the charming phrase in the major forming a