Review

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A Handbook of Musical Biography. Compiled and Edited by David Baptie. [W. Morley and Co.]

WE know how difficult it is in the limited space of 256 pages to compile a Musical Biography which shall do anything like adequate justice to the artists whose names are included; and we can also sympathise with an editor in his delicate task of selecting these names. We are content, therefore, to accept in the small volume before us the bald accounts of the career of some of the most-celebrated musicians; and, in view of Mr. Baptie's statement in his preface that he is desirous of "bestowing infinitely more attention upon the claims of our *native* musicians than has yet been given them," we cannot blame him for omitting the names of some of those forgotten artists which have so long appeared in more voluminous works. But we fail to see why, for example, such names as Miss Anna Williams, Miss Marian McKenzie, and Mr. F. King should be absent, whilst others who certainly do not hold so high a position in the profession are awarded a place. Brief, too, as the notices must necessarily be, something more might surely be said of Herr Staudigl, the bass singer, than that "he sang with great acceptance in many of the best operas," considering that he was the original *Elijah* at Birmingham when Mendelssohn produced his Oratorio there. We may also mention that much of the information contained in the book would be somewhat misleading to strangers, an instance of which occurs in the few lines devoted to Mrs. Weldon, who is said to have done "much to introduce M. Gounod to the notice of the English public." Apart from these objections, however, and merely, therefore, looking upon the book as one of reference for dates and descriptions of about 3,000 artists, there is a great deal to commend; and we trust that Mr. Baptie may reap that reward which he deserves for his arduous labours, which, as he tells us, extended over fully five-and-thirty years.

The Child's Pianoforte Book: Being a First Year's Course at the Pianoforte. For the Home, the Kindergarten, and the School. With upwards of fifty Original Tunes and Songs. By H. Keatley Moore, Mus. B., B.A., &c.

[W. Swan Sonnenschein and Co.]

"THIS little book," says its author, in an address to the teacher, "was written to supply a special need; and as it is certain that many teachers and parents must have felt themselves in like case with ourselves, it has been thought well to publish it." This "need," it must be said, was especially felt by those who taught upon the *Kindergarten* system; for the writer of the work informs us that when the Croydon Kindergarten and Preparatory School Company placed the department of pianoforte-teaching in his hands he found nothing already published which did not in some way or other run counter to the method of education adopted in the school. A review upon the book, therefore, must be a review upon the *Kindergarten* system, for certainly it appears admirably adapted to the purpose intended, and the only question is whether the foundation laid upon this principle is really a solid one. Into this matter it is unnecessary here to enter, and we need only say, therefore, that those who teach upon this method will fully appreciate the merits of Mr. Moore's work, which, it must be mentioned, is excellently got up, and contains some highly artistic illustrations.

Deux Valses Impromptu. Pour Piano. Par Ignace Gibsone. [Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

WE have never been able to discover the difference between a "Valse" and a "Valse Impromptu." Presuming, however, that this title is used to ward off any severe criticism, we scarcely think the qualification necessary in the two compositions before us. Mr. Gibsone invariably writes gracefully; but both these Waltzes are far above the average of mere dance music. No. 1, in A flat, has a melodious theme, which is well treated throughout, the changes of key preventing any undue feeling of monotony, and the passages lying easily under the hand. No. 2, in D flat, is perhaps even more popular in character, the subject being played with accompanying quavers in the right hand against a crotchet bass for the left. At the double bar we have a melody in the style of Weber's "Invitation to the Waltz," which, although now almost common property, is always effective.

The Desert. Symphonic Ode, in Three Parts. The words translated from the French of Auguste Colin by the Rev. J. Troutbeck. The music composed by Félicien David. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

NOW that the music of Berlioz has been rescued from that neglect which evidently arose rather from the apathy of those who cater for the public than from the want of appreciation of the public itself, it may reasonably be expected that the works of another French composer of somewhat kindred spirit, Félicien David, should be brought up for judgment. Although a prolific writer, there can be little doubt that his fame will chiefly rest upon "*Le Désert*," a composition which requires but to be known to receive that recognition due to its merit. The three parts into which the work is divided are each introduced by some descriptive lines, the music throughout depicting with remarkable fidelity the various scenes through which the caravan is passing—the Prayer to Allah, the Chant of the Muezzin (founded, it is believed, upon an Arabic melody), and the Dance painting in the most vivid colours the impressions of the composer during his long residence in the East. A folio edition of this work was published some years ago; but it has been reserved for Messrs. Novello to place it within the reach of Choral Societies by issuing it in the well-known cheap octavo form; the excellent translation of the text, by the Rev. J. Troutbeck, rendering it additionally valuable for general circulation in this country. The many beauties of this charming tone-picture can only be perfectly realised with the aid of a full orchestra, but the pianoforte accompaniment is so arranged as to give a very fair idea of the score.

Gyp. Song. Written by T. Ashe. Composed by Ciro Pinsuti. [R. Cocks and Co.]

EVEN in his most unpretending vocal pieces Signor Pinsuti always evidences that artistic culture which makes him stand apart from the conventional song-writers of the day. The little trifle before us is really charming in its simple beauty, the tuneful theme being surrounded by delicate figures in the accompaniment which materially enhance its effect. We are especially pleased with the use of the minor supertonic of the key (G minor); and the ascending and descending scale passages, with the minor sixth and major seventh, are extremely welcome to those who fully recognise the real characteristics of the minor scale. Both words and melody of this song must ensure for it a hearty welcome wherever it is heard.

Motivo Piacevole. For the Organ. By Neville George Barnett. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE composer of this piece seems to be a victim to the prevailing mania for chromatic harmonies. In form it is simple enough, and its manner is that of a slow minuet. The subjects are agreeable, but the effect is injured by progressions which jar upon the ear of the cultured musician. Discords of the ninth left unresolved and inversions of sevenths in one key resolved in another may be tolerated in an elaborate composition, but sound harshly in a brief, formal movement of six pages. In future efforts Mr. Barnett should endeavour to preserve more dignity and simplicity of utterance.

If ye love Me. Anthem. By Harry Dancey. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

IN choral music of every description repetitions of words are frequently not only inevitable but desirable. With Mr. Dancey, however, liberty in this respect degenerates into license. The first sentence is repeated no less than eight times, and the effect is painful because bordering on the ludicrous. In other respects there is nothing remarkable in this brief full Anthem. It is smoothly written and within the reach of the most ordinary choirs.

Andante con Variazioni e Fuga, for the Organ. By Thomas J. Dudeney. [Chappell and Co.]

THIS is altogether an interesting and useful work. The variations (seven in number) are in many respects admirable, and will not be found troublesome to the executant. The fugue is a little more difficult, but it will repay the trouble of learning it.