Review

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Second Gavotte for the Pianoforte. By Walter Macfarren.

THE fine, bold diatonic harmonies in this piece are so thoroughly characteristic of the "Gavotte" age, to which we are now so lovingly looking back, that we unhesitatingly recommend it to all admirers of that school of writing. The subject, too, is so extremely melodious as to ensure its welcome even with those who cannot appreciate the musicianlike manner in which it is treated. For the benefit, however, of those who wish to study as well as to play this composition, we would especially point out the beautiful sequence of four-twos and sixes, commencing at the end of the 8th bar, page 3, and also, in the *coda*, the descending scale in the bass, harmonised with alternate triads and sixes, a point of much interest, and a fitting termination to one of the composer's best contributions to our rapidly increasing healthy stock of pianoforte music.

In the Gloaming. Reverie for the Pianoforte. By Frederick F. Rogers.

If it be found necessary to give titles to pianoforte pieces, we think the more indefinite they are the better. Assuming that our modern compositions are destined to a prolonged existence, it is undoubtedly true that to future generations such a description as "Rondo in E flat" or "Capriccio in D minor" would convey no idea of the piece intended, and this is the reason why, in speaking of the well known B flat Sonata of Dussek, for instance, we invariably call it the Sonata "dedicated to Mrs. Chinnery." Composers, then, would do well to consider how in naming their works they can give them a sufficiently distinctive title, without challenging criticism upon its applicability, by labelling them as "descriptive music," which, after all (although perhaps the most general in the present day), is about the most difficult class of composition a young writer can attempt. Now the piece before us is a "Reverie," and "In the gloaming" will do as well for an inoffensive title as anything else, because it merely expresses the hour of peacefulness and repose, and these are precisely the characteristics of the majority of those "Songs without Words" of which Mendelssohn set us the pattern. Mr. Rogers has written an extremely melodious theme, in D flat major, the accompaniment to which has some little character of its own. The second subject, in the subdominant, serves sufficiently well as a contrast; and the original melody on its re-appearance ends the piece, with a short *coda* and a plagal cadence.

Three Autumn Songs, for a Contralto or Bass voice.

1. *A Lament for the Summer.*
2. *A Rainy day.*
3. *A Song for November.*

Composed by W. Howell Allchin.

MR. ALLCHIN must be a bold man to publish "Three Autumn Songs," although he announces on the title-page that they may be had separately. Even Madame Patey, to whom they are dedicated, would scarcely have the temerity to sing all three in succession; and smaller vocalists, therefore, can hardly be expected to make so hazardous an experiment, even upon the most indulgent listeners. Although we have occasional—and, perhaps, pardonable—reminiscences of Mendelssohn, the composer has set the words he has chosen with much judgment; and—chiefly by giving a variety of character to his accompaniments—has succeeded in being less monotonous than might have been expected. No. 1 will, we fear, be dragged through at a crawling pace by amateur singers, for it is written in 6-4 rhythm, and marked "Lento." The melody has much eloquence; and, if singers can be persuaded to feel two beats in the bar, it may be made effective. No. 2, with an obstinate syncopated accompaniment throughout, is the best of the three songs; but a good vocalist and a sympathetic pianist are absolutely necessary, to realise the intention of the composer. There is a simplicity in the treatment of No. 3, which may, perhaps, make it a more general favourite than its companions. The change into the tonic major shows that Mr. Allchin has well considered the meaning of the verses to which he has given a musical colouring; the hopeful

character of the final words, especially, being set with much poetical feeling.

Six Trios for Female Voices. The words translated by H. W. Dulcken, Ph. D. Composed by Franz Abt.

- No. 1. *Ave Maria.*
- „ 2. *The Wanderer's greeting.*
- „ 3. *Where deepest shadows hover.*
- „ 4. *Parting beam of daylight.*
- „ 5. *Once again the day hath flown.*
- „ 6. *Thou Heaven blue and bright.*

THIS series of melodious Trios will be a real boon to amateur vocalists who wish to cultivate part-singing, for they present no difficulties which careful practice will not overcome. No. 1 has a calm theme in true sympathy with the words, the snatches of *arpeggio* accompaniment stealing in with good effect, and a solo for a fourth voice adding much brightness to the composition. No. 2 is a well harmonised melody, flowing throughout without any break, and exceedingly simple, both in the voice-parts and accompaniment. No. 3, although equally unpretending, contains somewhat more variety, the triplet accompaniment contrasting well with the *arpeggio* quavers, which continue until the change from major to minor. No. 4 has an attractive subject, but we do not quite like the enharmonic changes which occur so frequently as somewhat to disturb the quiescence demanded by the poetry. No. 5 is in our opinion unquestionably the gem of the series. Commencing with a melodious theme, in E major, we get some highly effective imitative phrases; and a solo, for alto or mezzo-soprano voice, answered by the trio, with which it is united at the close of the verse, is a point of the utmost interest. This beautiful composition deserves, and will no doubt receive, a large amount of attention both from masters and pupils. No. 6 makes a worthy close to the series. It has an exceedingly pleasing subject, which is appropriately harmonised, and so quietly accompanied as to help timid singers, a characteristic which cannot be too highly commended in simple part-music. We may mention, in conclusion, that any of these Trios may be had separately.

Two-Part Songs. With Pianoforte accompaniment for the use of schools:—

- No. 1. *Monarch Winter.* Poetry by W. S. Passmore.
- „ 2. *The Skylark.* Poetry by Richard Yates Sturges.

Composed by Stephen S. Stratton.

THIS is just the sort of simple part-music that we should like to see introduced into schools, for it is both melodious and well written. No. 1 has a bold subject, the harmonies to which flow naturally enough to enrich, without disturbing, the melody. Of the two, however, we much prefer No. 2, although it is perhaps somewhat more difficult to sing. The theme colours the words with excellent effect, and point is gained by the occasional breaking of the voice-parts, instead of allowing them to flow on smoothly, as in the first song. We believe, however, that in most elementary schools it will be found necessary to transpose No. 2, if not No. 1, to a lower key, for the constant strain upon the upper G and F sharp is rather to be avoided than encouraged in young singers.

The Scalometer and Chord Indicator. Invented by Dr. L. M. Bonn.

OUR opinion (founded upon many years of experience) is that the rudimentary part of music cannot be effectually taught by contrivances, showing "at a glance," by sliding a piece of pasteboard up and down, or twirling round a circle, the number of sharps and flats required in each key, the position of the tones and semitones in the scale, and the *relative* minor (as it is still absurdly called) to every major key. However a student may pore over a diagram like this (peering through little holes to discover whether a note should be sharp, flat, or natural), it is on music-paper that he must eventually read music, and it is the *staff*, therefore, which should first be submitted to the eye. Our conviction upon this point, however, shall not prevent us from bestowing praise upon Dr. Bonn's very ingenious invention. On one side—termed the "Scalometer"—the

construction of every major scale is clearly shown, by moving round to the fixed place of *Do* any note which is chosen as the starting point, the naturals, sharps, or flats being indicated respectively by a white, red, or blue square. A minor third below *Do* major, the relative minor is given, both ascending and descending, according to the orthodox manner. But in examining this system closely, we find two embarrassing difficulties. In the first place, when a note is moved over *Do*, upon which a major scale is not constructed—as, for instance, D sharp—no sharps or flats are placed on the staff: this may mean that a scale is not usually written upon a sound so noted; but there is no explanation of this; and what learner is supposed to make it out for himself, especially when he finds that the scale of C appears precisely the same to the eye? In the second place, B and C are placed on the same square, the first coloured red and the second blue, forming, for example, the fourth sound in the scale of G flat major. According to Dr. Bonn's own explanation, this must mean that B sharp and C flat are identical: it is true that a musician knows better; but we presume that the "Scalometer" is to be used for the purpose of tuition, and not as a toy for those who already understand the matter. On the other side—called the "Chord Indicator"—the chords of the key-note, subdominant and dominant in the major key, are shown, corresponding with the note chosen for the *Do* on the opposite side; and the method of making the key-note and subdominant chords minor is also given. The received method of naming the notes according to their value—as semibreve, minim, &c.—is supplemented by the German plan of taking the semibreve as the whole, the minim as half, the crotchet as a quarter, &c., a system which we should like to see adopted in all instruction-books. Dr. Bonn's invention will especially appeal to the disciples of the Tonic Sol-fa method; for the syllables of the scale always appear in the same places, whatever may be the key-note; and thus the fixed sounds produced may be studied rather as a curiosity than a necessity. Much thought must have been bestowed upon the method of carrying out this invention; and we trust that its author will see that we appreciate his labours by devoting so much space to a discussion of its merits. We believe that if any contrivance of this kind can be of service in early tuition, the "Scalometer" will be found most valuable; and should Dr. Bonn see with us the defects we have pointed out, he can easily remedy them by a few words of explanation.

ASHDOWN AND PARRY.

Popular Classics for the Pianoforte. Selected and Edited by Walter Macfarren. Third Series.

THAT the idea of producing a carefully edited selection of those pianoforte works which have been allowed almost to fall into oblivion has proved a thoroughly successful one is amply shown by the issue of a third series of the "Popular Classics," every number in which we may at once say is a veritable gem. The Series contains (like those which have preceded it) twelve numbers; and Mr. Macfarren has, wisely we think, abstained from including any compositions of a very modern date, preferring to show how much sterling music of a former time we have neglected, rather than to point out the many works by composers of our own day which should command our attention. In the collection we have a Gavotte and Musette in D minor, and a Passepied, in B minor, by Bach; an "Allegro con Brio" (from the Sonata Op. 13) and a "Rondo Brillant" in B flat, by Hummel; a Sonata and a "Toccata" by Paradies; two Romances by Steibelt; the "Presto" in A flat, from Haydn's Sonata, No. 6; Woelfl's Sonata (Op. 53); Dussek's Saxon Air, with variations; and Handel's Gigue in F sharp minor. As persons previously unacquainted with these pieces may find it difficult to make a selection from this list, it will be better for those with a classical taste—or for those who wish to acquire one—to possess themselves of the entire series; but timid travellers in the regions of art hitherto unknown to them may be too cautious to hazard such an experiment,

and to such, therefore, we unhesitatingly say that they cannot be wrong whichever number they may choose.

F. PITMAN.

New Practical Singing-class Handbook. The Instructions written and the Music principally composed or arranged by George Wells.

THE gradual spread of the "Moveable Do" theory for the purposes of vocal class teaching is leading to strange results. Given the starting point—that we are no longer to pay attention to fixed sounds—Instruction books without number appear, the sole novelty in which is that the lessons (written in the present notation) are to be sung to the intervals of the scale, presuming only that the pupil can manage to find them out. Mr. Wells says that "the strongly-felt want of this book has given rise to its existence;" let us see how he has supplied this want. Commencing by showing the names of the notes, and explaining the beats in simple duple time, he gives us some "Rounds for two voices," written in different keys without any signature. Music in two parts afterwards appears, noted on the same principle, and then the student is told (without having had the sharp or flat even mentioned) that he is to commit a list of "key signatures" to memory. Upwards of twenty harmonised lessons (some in four parts) are then given, with the proper signatures to the keys; and at the end of all these the formation of scales, by means of sharps only, is explained, and immediately tunes are given in keys with flats. Now it appears to us that although an intelligent pupil might be able to sing all these lessons without the help of the explanations, he certainly would never be able to do so in consequence of them, for passing over the fact of tunes being written in keys with sharps and flats before anything has been said about the formation of scales—the effect of a sharp is not even shown until the 17th page, and the effect of a flat is never mentioned at all. However, as it is stated in the Introduction to the book that it "does not pretend to teach the pupils without oral instruction," we will pass to the music, which consists partly of compositions by the author, and partly of selected pieces harmonised by him. Mr. Wells says that in studying these lessons "the taste of the pupil is cultivated while he is learning to sing." Let the reader judge whether the following harmonies (selected at random) will cultivate the taste: "Fruitful Fields," between the first and second bar, two fourths rising; "Farewell to the Village," between the fourteenth and fifteenth bar, a fourth rising to a fifth; "Cheerful Strains," eleventh bar commencing on the second quaver, three perfect fifths in succession; "Up the Hills," leading to the last bar before the *Da Capo*, perfect fifths between soprano and bass; "My Highland Home," third bar, an incomprehensible harmony upon F $\sharp$; and, worst of all, the first phrase in "Cherry Ripe," harmonised with a bass in perfect fifths with the melody, every time it occurs. Like many authors whose works have been submitted to us for notice, Mr. Wells may defend the illogical arrangement of the instructions in his book; but the defects in his harmonies are inaccuracies which speak for themselves, and we should not be doing our duty as reviewers were we to neglect pointing them out.

J. B. CRAMER AND Co.

Le Joueur de Flûte (Opéra de Hervé), pour Piano.

Une Heure de Royauté (Opéra de Armand Roux), pour Piano.

Une Fête aux Champs; Danse Rustique, pour Piano.
Par J. Rummel.

MR. RUMMEL's two Operatic Fantasias are the very best we have ever seen from his pen, which as our readers know is a somewhat prolific one. No. 1 commences with a stirring theme, followed by an "Allegro Vivo," an "Allegretto" and a melodious Waltz, all of which are excellently arranged. But No. 2 will unquestionably become the favourite, for not only are the airs tuneful, but