

Review

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REVIEWS.

Twelve New Carols for Christmastide. Written by Shapcott Wensley. Music by various Composers. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE revival of the ancient custom of carol singing at Christmas in England is a noteworthy feature in the musical life of the country at present, and year by year the demand for carols suitable for church or home use shows a strong tendency to increase. Of course, no one would desire the displacement of the old favourites by new ditties, but there is no reason why present-day versifiers and composers should not devote some portion of their talents to the production of carols worthy to take place by the side of "God rest you merry, gentlemen," and "Good King Wenceslas," and the present set, which is issued in a conveniently small form, should therefore receive a welcome, especially when among the composers we find such names as Stainer, Eaton Fanning, Garrett, Barnby, Tours, Bridge, and Battison Haynes. While some of these carols are as simple and tuneful as those of traditional origin, others are more developed, combining the characteristics of the anthem and the part-song. In the former category may be placed, as a prominent example, Mr. Myles B. Foster's "The Mother and Child," a very tuneful air; and in the latter, Sir Joseph Barnby's "The Anthem of Peace" and "In the Manger." The last-named is particularly effective, commencing sadly in D minor, but quickly changing to the tonic major, and ending in the most triumphant fashion. Another number in which a good effect is gained by a change from minor is "The Desert," by Miss Emma Mundella, the concluding phrase of this being very charming. The book, which is published at the moderate price of one shilling, may be warmly commended to the notice of those who meditate carol-singing during the approaching Yule-tide. Mr. Wensley's lines are graphic and expressive, but also noteworthy for the simplicity of diction which should be observed in efforts of this nature. The carols are also issued in the Tonic Sol-fa Notation.

Novello's Part-Song Book. Second Series, Nos. 646-649. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

IN these four numbers of a very popular publication we have a series of four charming part-songs by Professor Villiers Stanford, the first three being settings of verses by the late Charles Kingsley. The first, "Soft, soft Wind," is a singularly expressive little piece in which the syncopations in the lower voices have an excellent effect. It is rather chromatic, but it presents no unusual difficulties to a fairly trained choir. The *piano* close is especially charming. The next, "Sing heigh-ho," begins plaintively in G minor but finishes brightly and piquantly in the tonic major. The verses have been set before, but not more appropriately or effectively. "Airly Beacon" is rather sad in character, but this is necessitated by the words, which are a lament for a lost love. There is a decided madrigalian flavour in the music, with its points of imitation and generally independent part-writing. The last of the set is "The Knight's Tomb," words by Samuel Taylor Coleridge; it is a very mournful strain in G minor, with a somewhat startling, but undeniably effective climax in which, within half-a-dozen bars, we pass through the keys of F minor, D flat, A flat, and C minor, back to the dominant and tonic of the original, the final chord being in the major. Altogether these part-songs may be regarded as among the most artistic examples of their kind.

The Cathedral Psalter (Public School edition). [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

ONLY a few words are needed to introduce this handy edition of a very popular Psalter to the notice of those whom it may concern. The Cathedral Psalter was quickly recognised as combining the merits of several earlier pointed versions of the Psalms, and has now become a standard work in choirs and places where they sing. The only peculiarity in the latest edition now before us is that indications are given as to the verses or half-verses which should be sung by choir and congregation together or by choir alone. The contrasts thus obtainable are very effective and impressive, and the present edition will be found to be of very great value alike to those who have to

conduct as to those who take part in the daily service in our public schools, as the means not only of a better but a more devotional rendering of the Psalms.

Christmastide Carols. Second Series. Words by the Rev. Bernard Reynolds. Music (old French melodies) harmonised by George C. Martin.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE carols, eight in number, possess the quaint, old-world flavour which is generally found so alluring at Christmas. In harmonising ancient or traditional tunes straightforward simplicity and avoidance of modern chromatic chords and progressions are desirable, and Dr. Martin has recognised these points, though in all instances he employs the scale progressions now in use rather than the ancient modes, which to many ears sound harsh and unpleasant. The carols are all as unpretending as they are tuneful.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE funeral obsequies of the late Robert Franz, the representative composer of the modern German *Lied*, took place on October 27, at Halle, in the presence of the Municipal and Academical dignitaries, as well as of the Academical and Musical societies of the town. At the grave side, which was decked with innumerable wreaths and floral offerings, several chorales of the deceased master's composition were sung, under the direction of the Musical Director of the University, Herr Reubke; the musical portion of the proceedings concluding with Chopin's Funeral March. The mortal remains of the composer were laid at rest by the side of his wife, who had preceded him in death two years ago.

The municipal authorities of Halle have decided to name one of the principal streets of the town "Robert Franz Strasse."

A commemorative performance in honour of the late Robert Franz was given on the 1st ult. by the Berlin Loewe-Verein, on which occasion a number of Franz's songs obtained a hearing. Dr. Runze, the President of the Society, delivered an interesting discourse on the merits of the departed musician.

The *Gazzetta Musicale* of Milan contains the following interesting information, furnished to it by a Vienna correspondent: "A magnificent work on the Exhibition is just now in course of preparation, and will be published simultaneously in Vienna and in Paris. It will be a book edited by all the able experts who have contributed to the excellent artistic result of the Exhibition—viz., Professor Adler (representing Austria), Professor Fleischer (Berlin), Dr. Glossy (Vienna), Drs. Trautmann and Vandberg (Munich), M. Bock (Russia), M. Régner (France), &c. The book will be written in three languages—viz., German, French, and English, and be illustrated by a great number of phototypes representing the most precious objects in each section, as well as portraits of those persons who have worked hard for the success of the Exhibition, pictorial reproductions of dramatic scenes, views of the Exhibition buildings, &c. The principal editorship is in the hands of Herr Schneider, who has been for a long time the editor of the journal *Die Illustration*."

A performance of Liszt's Oratorio "The Legend of St. Elizabeth" was announced to be given by the Berlin Wagner Society at its first Concert this season, on the 21st ult., under the direction of Herr Klindworth and with the co-operation of the choir of the Berlin Teachers' Association.

Mr. Eugene d'Albert, the well-known pianist-composer, has completed an opera, entitled "Der Rubin," and has also written a new Pianoforte Concerto as well as a String Quartet, which latter is expected to be shortly performed for the first time at Berlin, under the auspices of Dr. Joachim.

Rubinstein's ballet "Die Rebe" and a one-act comic opera by the same composer, entitled "Unter Räubern," will be performed for the first time at the Berlin Royal Opera during the present season. The last-named work was first brought out, under Rubinstein's direction, in 1883, at the Hamburg Stadt-Theater, when it met with a *succès d'estime*, which the writer of these Notes, who was present on the occasion, thinks was all that the work merited.