Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 22, No. 456 (Feb. 1, 1881), p. 85

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3358074>

Accessed: 28-12-2015 05:16 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

a chorus, "Hand in hand we hasten," call for no special remark; but the ballad, for soprano, "Sweet Fairy, who for countless years," will no doubt be a favourite, both for its tunefulness and sympathetic expression of the words. The Finale—a trio and chorus, preceded by a brief Recitative—commencing in G major, has an effective solo in B♭ for contralto (a voice, by the way, somewhat unduly neglected in the work); and the choral portion, whilst appropriate to the subject, offers no difficulties to amateur executants. We have little doubt that this Cantata will speedily make its way to the popularity it deserves.

The Great Musicians. No. I., "*Wagner*," by Francis Hueffer. No. II., "*Rossini and his School*," by H. Sutherland Edwards. [London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington.]

THESE two little volumes mark the commencement of a series of biographical sketches written by various hands, under the editorship of Dr. Francis Hueffer; the apparent object being to do for "Great Musicians" what has been done for "Great Artists" in the publishers' series devoted to painters. It would hardly be fair to expect important contributions to biography in works of such limited scope; and it happens, with regard to the volumes before us, that each is the production of an author who has covered the same ground before. Dr. Hueffer, we need scarcely say, has been a large contributor to the English department of Wagnerian literature, while Mr. Sutherland Edwards produced a "*Life of Rossini*" shortly after that composer's death. The interest of the present works has, therefore, been anticipated, and students of musical bibliography are able to make a shrewd guess, not only at the facts but at the opinions they contain. It is, however, an advantage to the general reader to have the material connected with each subject put before him in a limited compass and succinct manner. Dr. Hueffer, who, as may be supposed, treats his theme sympathetically, touches with great lightness upon the circumstances of Wagner's life, the book being, to a large extent, taken up with an exposition of the master's theory and descriptions of his various operas. Whether due proportion has been observed between the man and his work is a question upon which opinions may differ. On his part Mr. Edwards traces with some minuteness of detail the incidents of Rossini's long career, going on to sketch the achievements, in what he styles Rossini's "school," of Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi. The multiplication of such elementary books as these is much to be desired, and may be regarded as a good sign, since those who are interested in a man's music are always eager to know the man himself, and whoever comes to read of the man may possibly feel the promptings of curiosity about his music.

Narcissus and Echo. A Dramatic Cantata. The words written by Miriam Ross. The music composed by Edwin C. Such, Mus. Bac., Cantab. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE fanciful classical legend—too well known to be here repeated—concerning Narcissus and the Nymph Echo has been effectively woven into a libretto for musical purposes; and although Mr. Such's setting of the words fails to display that individuality of style which would lift his Cantata far above the level of the many similar works of the day, it is melodious, refined, and thoroughly vocal throughout. There is character in the solo and chorus "In a ring"; the Trio, "Ah, woe is me," shows much skill and dramatic feeling; and the Chorus of Bacchanals, with snatches of solo for *Echo*, is unquestionably the best piece in the work; an excellent effect is gained by the repetitions of phrases; and the exclamations of the Bacchanals, "Hark! she mocks us," and "While weeping she repeats our strains," give a dramatic colouring to the piece which seems to suggest the accessories of the stage: indeed as a drawing-room Cantata, even, it is worth attempting, with the aid of scenery and dresses. We may also select for praise the "Elegy," for a bass voice, where *Echo* again repeats the notes she hears; and the final chorus, "The day is dying"—(in which, by the way, we cannot see why the basses at page 89 are made to rise to A flat, instead of G sharp)—concludes the Cantata with good effect. Choral Societies will, we think, be

pleased to hear of a composition so well suited for performance with merely a pianoforte accompaniment; and we shall be glad if we can help it into public notice.

Studies in Worship-Music; chiefly as regards Congregational Singing. By J. Spencer Curwen.

[J. Curwen and Sons.]

THE author of this useful and thoughtful work tells us that portions of it are reprinted, with additions and modifications, from various Reviews, Magazines, and Newspapers; but the subjects are so logically and carefully arranged that this will be found no objection by the general reader. The book is divided into three parts—Historical, Practical, and Descriptive. In the first part much valuable information is collected on the "Old Parochial Psalmody"; and an interesting extract from Strype's Annals gives authentic evidence of the gradual awakening of the English Church on the return to this country of those zealous reformers who had been driven away by the persecution of Mary. "Grindal, the new Bishop of London," he tells us, "preached at Paul's Cross, and after sermon a psalm was sung (which was the common practice of the Reformed churches abroad), wherein the people also joined their voices. As soon as they commenced singing in London, immediately not only the churches in the neighbourhood, but even the towns far distant began to vie with each other in the practice. You may now sometimes see at Paul's Cross, after the service, six thousand persons, young and old, of all sexes, singing together; this sadly annoys the mass priests, for they perceive that by this means the sacred discourse sinks more deeply into the minds of men." When the version of the Psalms known as "Sternhold and Hopkins" was duly authorised, in 1562, our author truly says that "Psalm-singer" was indeed but another name for a Protestant. We regret that we cannot quote more extensively from this portion of Mr. Curwen's book; but cordially recommend those interested in the subject to peruse this record of many facts connected with the early history of Psalmody in England, which cannot be too extensively known to lovers of congregational singing. In Part II. we have some very sensible and acute remarks upon the use of the organ in divine service. "It is far easier," says Mr. Curwen, "to make an organ than an organist"; and although assuredly the former task is a somewhat difficult one, we are almost inclined to agree with him. The qualifications necessary for a really good organist are more than is generally imagined; for to play through a service in the usual conventional style, and to infuse a really religious spirit into both the singing and the congregation, are two distinct things. What, for example, will apathetic organists say when they hear how much sympathy with the music must be felt even by a person who aspires to turn a barrel-organ? Speaking of one of these instruments actually now in use at the old Parish Church of East Ham, Essex, Mr. Curwen says: "I recently persuaded the old man who has turned the organ for forty years to give me a recital. It was of no use, he assured me, for any one to play that organ who had no ear for music. He explained how, at the reciting-notes of the chants, he had to pause in his turning; how he gave a *rallentando* at the end of the hymn; and how he piled on the stops at the successive lines of a repeating tune." Here then is a man who, instead of degrading his art into a mechanical labour, elevates his mechanical labour into an art. Pursuing this "Practical" portion of his theme, the author treats of the Gregorian and Anglican Chant, very fairly, as we think, reproducing the arguments for and against Gregorianism, and quoting a powerful attack on its principles from the late Mr. Henry Smart's preface to his "*Choral Book*," in which he says that it is "a style of music utterly barbarous in itself, antagonistic to the grammatical structure of the language, and so wholly opposed to the feeling of the people that it can never come into general use, except on the incredible supposition of a second universal ascendancy of the church which invented it." In the remarks upon the "Harmony Proper for Congregational Music," many truths are given forth respecting the treatment of vocal parts, and it is truly said that there are many good instrumentalists who know not how to write for voices. "The old counterpoint," Mr. Curwen reminds us, "was born of singing rather than of