Review

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Home, sweet Home. Transcription for the Pianoforte, by Aloys Hennes. [Enoch and Sons.]

WE should be very glad if composers would more accurately describe their works upon the title-pages. Thalberg does not term his Fantasia upon "Home, sweet home" a "Transcription;" and why then should Aloys Hennes so name a "Rêverie" or "Meditation" upon the same theme, more especially when the subject is not once given in its simple unadorned beauty? As an air with variations the piece should find a ready acceptance; for, although possessing no claim to originality of treatment, the passages are graceful and refined, lie easily under the hands, and are sufficiently sympathetic with the character of the melody to fall pleasantly on the ear. The fingering too will be found an assistance to amateurs, who, although not much advanced, may rest assured that they will encounter no formidable difficulties.

Gavotte in E minor, for the Pianoforte, by E. Silas. [Ashdown and Parry.]

JUDGING from this specimen, Mr. Silas seems to possess a very decided talent for the composition of the old dance-music; and although in the present day we are inundated with similar pieces, a Gavotte such as the one before us must be always welcome. It is something to say that the opening theme strikes us as being extremely original, and that the subject, in the tonic major, is not only refreshing by contrast, but very melodious and characteristic. The majority of the modern Gavottes, Bourrées, Sarabandes, &c., are so thoroughly conventional that Mr. Silas has a right to congratulate himself upon producing a composition which does not rely wholly upon its antique form as a recommendation.

Caprice à la Gavotte, pour le Pianoforte, par C. J. Duchemin. [B. Williams.]

THE admirers of the old dance-tunes, upon which some of our best composers have exercised their talents, are not likely to complain that the supply falls short of the demand. Reviewers, however, who are constantly called upon for their judgment upon these works, kindly as they may feel disposed, have a hard task before them; for where the family likeness is so strong it becomes somewhat perplexing to seize on any special characteristics upon which to comment. The composition before us is no exception to this rule. The form and spirit of the Gavotte have been well caught by the composer, the second subject, in the subdominant, being more tuneful even than the principal theme; but it would puzzle us to say that any point deserves more than the ordinary praise due to satisfactory workmanship. Being essentially a Gavotte—and a very simple and unpretending one too—we see no reason why it should be termed a "Caprice à la Gavotte."

Polonaise, for the Pianoforte, composed by Edward Hecht. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE composer of this Polonaise has already shown not only that he is an accomplished musician, but that he has thoroughly mastered the scholastic drudgery necessary to be passed through before aspiring to the position of a composer. But when the end has been attained, we care not for any display of the means by which it has been arrived at; and yet that the "Polonaise" form has been used in the composition before us as a peg upon which to exhibit specimens of the author's theoretical knowledge no unprejudiced person can doubt. We say this with less hesitation because we have awarded well-deserved praise to many of this composer's works, every one of which indicates a very decided creative talent, and we should be sorry indeed if he were to desert the path he has so successfully chosen. Advanced pianists will find some excellent practice in the "Polonaise," which has a well-marked principal theme; but a want of what musicians term "repose" will be felt both by player and listener which can scarcely be compensated for by the artistic workmanship displayed throughout the piece.

Four Album Leaves, for the Pianoforte, composed by R. F. Dale. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE four pianoforte sketches, although unequal in merit, show a commendable desire to escape from mere commonplace; but in attempting to be original the composer occasionally becomes merely eccentric. No. 1 we care less about than its companions; but No. 2, in spite of the wide skips, which would tax the powers of an amateur to play correctly, has much merit. No. 3, an Andante, in F minor, is cleverly written and melodious; but surely the manner in which the two hands occasionally jostle each other can scarcely be said to add to the beauty of the passages. In No. 4 we have a good specimen of Mr. Dale's power of writing freely for both hands, the passages being less laboured than many in the preceding numbers. These "Album Leaves" seem to prove that something more than graceful trifles may be expected from their author.

Sweet and Low. Song. Words by Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L.

I arise from dreams of thee. Song. Words by Percy B. Shelley.

A New Year's Burden. Song. Words by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Music composed by Florence A. Marshall.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

NONE but those whose business it is to make themselves acquainted with the various so-called "new" songs which are continually issuing from the press can have the least idea of the quantity of commonplace inanity and twaddle which in these effusions is mostly offered to the public. The general recipe for the manufacture of a new song is somewhat as follows: take a commonplace phrase of eight bars—if after the style of Balfe, so much the better; follow it by a second phrase, also of eight bars, modulating into the dominant; return to the original key, with an allusion to the sub-dominant, and conclude with another eight-bar phrase; accompany with well-worn arpeggios, and season to taste with Italian phrases, "con espressione," &c. It is no exaggeration to say that a large proportion of new songs are constructed on this model; our readers will therefore not be surprised that many which are sent to this journal for review are never noticed at all.

It is with the more pleasure that from time to time the reviewer is rewarded by the discovery of a few gems in the middle of the heaps of rubbish which it is his duty to peruse. Now and then he finds songs which do contain something fresh in their ideas, and which are written with true musical feeling. Such are the three songs now under notice, which we may say at once strike us as being very far above the average. We do not know whether the composer is an amateur; but if she be, she displays an amount of skill which very few amateurs possess. Excepting one passage of accompaniment in "I arise from dreams of thee," of which we shall speak presently, we find only highly finished workmanship, while the melodies throughout are graceful, pleasing, and for the most part free from reminiscences.

"Sweet and Low" contains the only exception to this remark. The rise from the third to the sixth of the scale (in the third and fourth bars of the melody) is identical with that in Mr. Barnby's setting of the same words; the harmony is also similar; but the resemblance is only for two notes, and is in all probability accidental. The whole song is very charming; the rocking figure of accompaniment in the left hand is well sustained, and the modulations are well managed. We especially like the changes of harmony on the word "sleep" (page 4, line 2) and the effect of the augmented common chord in the last bar of page 3, line 3.

"I arise from dreams of thee" pleases us as a whole even more than the song just noticed. We think it a pity that the composer has (in Italian fashion) given only one note to the first two syllables of the words; this, however, singers can easily alter. The middle portion (*agitato*) of this song is particularly good. There is one passage in