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The Oxford Book of German Verse, from the 12th to the 20th Century by H. G. Fiedler
Review by: E. N.

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in subtlety as our sense of harmonic modulation is beyond theirs. But he cannot yet be said to have quite made out his case, suggestive as his presentation of it is. What is now desirable is that someone equally at home in poetic and in musical rhythm should survey the whole field afresh and try to decide which of the two modern views carries the greater weight of evidence. Mr. Williams has unfortunately not set himself to do this; but he has produced a book that should be stimulating and useful even to those who cannot always see eye to eye with him in his scansions. E. N.

The Oxford Book of German Verse, from the 12th to the 20th century. Edited by H. G. Fiedler, with a preface by Gerhart Hauptmann.

[Clarendon Press.]

Professor Fiedler's collection is of interest not only to the student of German poetry pure and simple,—who is here given the best and most comprehensive anthology of the kind that has yet appeared in England—but also to the musician, who will find in the volume some scores of poems that the great German composers have made familiar to him. Prof. Fiedler has had the happy idea of appending to such of the poems as have been set to music the name of the composer and the Opus number of the setting. The information thus given is very full and accurate; one misses only a few of the more out-of-the-way settings, such as the beautiful 'Die stille Stadt' of Fritz Koegel (words by Richard Dehmel), and Theodor Streicher's setting of Heine's 'Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam.' The collection ranges from Volkslieder of the 12th to the 16th century, through Luther and Sachs and the 17th-century poets to Gellert, Klopstock, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller and others, to Heine and the great chorus of modern lyrists. Eduard Mörike, so beloved of Hugo Wolf, is represented by no fewer than twenty-eight poems,—a striking testimony to the merit of the poet whom Wolf did so much to make popular. The fineness of Wolf's instinct is incidentally shown by the fact that most of the poems here chosen for their purely poetic value are among those selected by him for music. One is struck, in glancing through the volume, at not only the great body of this German poetry but the extraordinary continuity of its spirit; both the expressive 'Elegie' of Walther von der Vogelweide and the 12th-century folk-songs strike, in their several ways, notes that have been incessantly sounded in the German lyric ever since. To the reader already familiar with classical German poetry, but not so well-read in the modern, Prof. Fiedler's liberal drafts upon living or recently dead poets—such as Theodor Storm, Klaus Groth ('O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück,' &c.), Keller, Theodor Fontane, Hermann Lingg ('Immer leiser wird mein Schummer,' &c.), Hermann Allmers ('Feldeinsamkeit'), Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (twenty-two poems), Paul Heyse, Martin Greif, Detlev von Liliencron, Gerhart Hauptmann, Richard Dehmel, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, &c.—will be especially welcome. One effect of the volume is to show the simplicity of the rhythms upon which so much of the finest German poetry has been based. After so many poems built on simple successions of twos or threes or fours, it is refreshing to come upon the big orchestral sweep of such a rhythm as that of Gerhart Hauptmann's 'Die Tauben':

'O ihr weissen, maurischen Städte! Ihr südlichen Hänge!
Schwarze Cypressen und goldene Kuppeln im Gartengedränge!' &c.

with its rich and musical flow of spondees and dactyls.

Prof. Fiedler's notes rightly occupy the minimum of space, but afford the reader a good deal of help on questions historical, literary, musical, and philological. E. N.

Musikalische Formenlehre. By Hugo Leichtentritt.

[Breitkopf & Härtel.]

Herr Leichtentritt has crowded an amazing quantity of information into the two hundred and thirty pages of his book on musical form. It is probably at once the most comprehensive and most succinct of works of this kind. The author is not only a sound theorist, but has a far profounder knowledge of musical history than, for instance, the average English writer upon this subject. Not the

least valuable feature of his book is the copious references it gives to all the works in which the historical development of any given form can best be studied. He is abreast of all modern developments also, and does not commit the vulgar error—so regrettable, for example, in a work like the new Grove's Dictionary—of supposing that the story of interesting and logical form terminates with the old-style symphony. We could wish, though, that Herr Leichtentritt had given more space to the modern poetic forms of musical structure. While sympathetic to them, and lucid in such exposition of them as he has given, he curtails his analysis at this point on the plea that there is here no question of a definitely fixed form. 'Die Formenlehre hat mit dieser sogenannten "symphonischen Dichtung" wenig zu tun, eben weil es sich hier nicht um Herausarbeiten einer bestimmten Form handelt. Damit ist nicht gesagt, dass eine symphonische Dichtung formlos sein muss; sie schafft sich ihre Form jedesmal neu, je nach der Aufgabe, die sie sich stellt.' All the more reason, surely, to point out to the student the main lines of design, at once musical and poetical, upon which this kind of work has run. We may ask, indeed, whether the time has not gone by for writing about the structure of music purely from the external standpoint. In the finest music, both old and new, external form is hardly separable from the much subtler and more intensive quality of style. It is style, far more than form, that makes the C minor Symphony a better work than, say, Stanford's 'Irish' Symphony, or Wolf's 'Denk' es, o Seele' a finer song than Tosti's 'Good-bye.' Musical structure is still too often discussed from the mechanical standpoint of the builder rather than the emotional standpoint of the artist. E. N.

The Rise and Development of Opera. By Joseph Goddard.

[William Reeves.]

Mr. Goddard writes awkwardly and sometimes far from lucidly. His sketches of the development of opera in Italy, France and Germany run on the ordinary text-book and dictionary lines. The bypaths of the subject,—which are of course essential to the complete understanding of the main paths—are left unexplored, and the lack of original research is made up for by quotations from writers like Lavoix and Rockstro. Mr. Goddard's theories as to the failure of English opera can hardly be said to have been proved. All these as to an imaginary 'English spirit,' and the supposed affinity between the English nature and 'ideal drama' (*i.e.*, oratorio), are the merest beating of the air. The main fact in connection with the sterility of English opera is that there is practically nowhere in England where an Englishman's opera can be certain of being produced. Mr. Goddard, though he admires Wagner, sees no future for opera along Wagnerian lines. In this, as in his general remarks upon the older 'melodic' style of opera and the modern continuous and illustrative styles, he is voicing a personal prepossession rather than stating a reasoned case. The volume contains a number of illustrations, most of them superfluous, some of them irrelevant, and one or two of them inexplicable. There is a photograph of a bust that is alleged to represent Elgar. It would be interesting to know how many of the composer's friends would recognise him in it. E. N.

Sonatas on National Airs, Nos. 7, 8 and 9. For Pianoforte. By Ernest Austin.

[J. H. Larway.]

The debated question whether it is æsthetically right to use national tunes as thematic material for the construction of serious works has been evaded here by Mr. Austin, as his Sonatas cannot be regarded as serious music. Their title implies some leaning towards formal design and consistency; but although they have form they are anything but formal, and their development is sometimes curiously inconsequent. The sections of the seventh Sonata that are based upon 'Oh dear, what can the matter be' are the most acceptable in the above groups. It is difficult to work up enthusiasm for Sonatas 7 and 8, in spite of much that is ingenious; their fancifulness often seems to lack musical reason. Some of the earlier Sonatas were distinctly superior. But good or bad, these works have the merit of being out of the ordinary, and their light-hearted spirit is very welcome.