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Review by: H. G.

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and enervation of conscience, which here again had won a victory over one of the bravest souls, weary of the bitterness and harrowing suspicion that, from now on, I was doomed to be more deeply alone than ever before. For I had never had anyone but Richard Wagner.

At the height of his fame, a few months before his death, the master of Bayreuth—in a conversation with Frau Foerster-Nietzsche—gave utterance to a similar thought: 'Tell your brother,' he said softly, 'that I am quite alone since he went away and left me.'

J. W. K.

How to use a Player-Piano. By Harry Ellingham.

(Grant Richards. 6s.)

For some years up to August, 1914, there existed a monthly for player-pianists, called *The Player-Piano Review*. This was founded by three enthusiasts, and written and conducted by them (with the help of other contributors to the literary pages). One of these three enthusiasts was Mr. Harry Ellingham, an expert in the matter of player mechanism, a gifted musician, and an admirable performer on this instrument. Being associated with the player in the way of business, he had been taught, and he naturally played, in the manner prevalent ten or fifteen years ago among the sales-rooms; but being also a musician and an enthusiast for the advancement of this particular executive art, he sought constantly to improve his system of control and execution, and he therefore evoked the interest, and the resulting criticisms and suggestions, of professional musicians. In the end Mr. Ellingham became one of the finest player-pianists of all the present writer has met.

Mr. Ellingham contributed to the *Player Review* a series of articles; he has made a selection from these, and has issued them in book form. The first chapter gives the history of the pneumatic pianoforte, and an outline of its present condition. The second chapter provides a course of elementary instruction in playing:

A month spent on the exercises I have given here already, using, say, one and a half hours a day, would give you that command over your player which will place you for all time in a position far ahead of the average performer. My own efforts during my initiation period were confined to three rolls. I worked five hours a day for rather more than three weeks; perhaps 120 or 130 hours all told.

The third chapter shifts the character of elementary practice to song accompaniments. The author believes that much can be quickly learnt by playing with a friend who sings songs. Friendship is, of course, a wonderful thing; but of late a system of providing songs as solo pieces has been devised, and these may take the place of the actual singer. Later chapters in the book give an account of the construction of the player, for the convenience of performers who, like the organist, wish to know something of the innards of their instrument, so as to be able to remedy minor defects. Here the author is splendidly clear. Mr. Ellingham discusses certain problems of roll-making, and describes some of his personal experiments in the matter of pneumatic mechanism and 'touch'; he becomes technical, but these papers were popular in the *Review*, evidently appealing to many player-pianists.

The book ends with a glossary of terms. It must be said that some of the definitions are rather rough and ready: *accelerando* and *rallentando*, for example, mean more than simply to play faster or slower. This, however, is a slight matter; and there is nothing in the book to hinder a reviewer from very cordially recommending it to beginners in player-pianism.

S. G.

Introductory Sketch of Irish Musical History. By W. H. Grattan Flood.

[William Reeves.]

This is a digest of the author's *History of Irish Music*, made for the convenience of those who want a cheap and handy book.

Those of us who know our Grattan Flood are not surprised to find him leading off with somewhat extravagant claims on behalf of his country's contributions to the art. In his first page he says:

'Not alone did Irish monks propagate sacred and secular music throughout France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and the far North, but they made their influence felt at Lindisfarne, Malmesbury, Glastonbury, and other centres in England.'

If they propagated music from the far North to the Mediterranean, it is not surprising to find them doing something for benighted England on the way. But did no English monks or other early musicians do anything for music on the Continent? Again:

'Scotland owes her music to Ireland, as is admitted by all historians. . . . Wales, too, is indebted for her music to Ireland. . . . The Eisteddfod is merely a replica of the Irish Feis. The invention of *organum* must be credited to the Irish. . . . The Irish of the 6th to 8th centuries discovered the art of part-singing or plural melody.'

And so on. Dr. Flood is a trifle too sure about things of this kind. After all, in dealing with periods about which records are scarce and not too reliable, we can do little more than surmise as to who was first in the field in any department. Many otherwise well-informed musicians are hazy as to who among modern composers began to develop the possibilities of the whole-tone scale. If such haziness is possible in the case of a feature so recent, and with printed copies galore, what must it be in regard to matters belonging to a period when musical compositions existed—or were lost—in manuscript only, and when even notation itself was in an unsettled state? But does it matter much, anyway? Surely a nation's position in the world of art to-day depends next to nothing on what it did in the 9th century. The question is, What is it doing in the 20th? When we come to Dr. Flood's chapter on Irish music from 1877 to 1919, we read:

'During the past forty years Irish musicians have contributed their quota to musical art. The outstanding names from 1877 to 1919 are Sir Frederick Ouseley, Rev. F. Scotson Clark, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Augusta Holmes, Sir Charles Stanford, Arthur Hervey, Victor Herbert, Dr. Charles Wood, Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Buck, Norman O'Neill, and Mrs. Curwen.'

After expressing relief that the Rev. Scotson Clark was, after all, not an Englishman, we may point out that of these hardly any received their training or did their life-work in Ireland. Two were born at Paris, and one of them—Augusta Holmes—is a French composer if ever there was one. Would any other nation (save, perhaps, Wales), if asked for a list of composers during that period, be so hard up as to fall back on one of the Scotson Clark type? Apparently Dr. Flood regards the reverend gentleman seriously as a composer on the strength of his works numbering over five hundred. He ends this chapter by saying that,

‘... given a generous measure of Home Rule, there is every reason to believe that in the new social order music will develop on right lines, and we may hope for a national school of music such as the world has never seen.’

Well, hope springs eternal, but there is little likelihood of a national Irish School such as the world has never seen, so long as most of Ireland's musicians prefer to live anywhere but in the Isle.

Of the heart-searching beauty of Irish folk-music there can be no question: it stands without a rival. Nor are the interpretative gifts of her sons and daughters to be disputed. But more than these two constituents go to the making of a great national school of composition. It would be of interest to speculate as to the reason for Ireland's comparative failure in this respect. Troubled history cannot altogether be blamed, for we do not find this factor preventing other small nationalities from expressing themselves in art. Perhaps the fatal defect so far has been that the most gifted of Irish musicians have left their country (if they were born there), have settled in England, and have ended by writing music that suggests very little of Ireland, but a great deal of England. For example, Sullivan was born at Lambeth, and wrote music that was English to the last semiquaver—when it wasn't German. But as his parents came from Cork and his grandfather from Kerry, Dr. Flood says he was ‘through and through Irish.’ But how many of us ever think of him as Irish? We are influenced by his music and his life-place, not by his parents' birthplace. The national school of music that was helped along was that of England, not Ireland. Even Stanford, than whom no composer is more delightfully Irish when treating the folk-music of his country, is always regarded as one of the group of men to whom the growth of the present English revival of composition is due. What can be more English than his settings of Elizabethan poetry? However, the most important thing about Dr. Flood's book is that it does give us a great deal of information that is otherwise hard to obtain, and his facts we accept as readily as we shy at some of his deductions. I venture to suggest to the Doctor that at present his method as a historian suffers from patriotic bias—which ceases to be a virtue when there is more than a mere flavour of it. Some of the grounds on which he claims a musician as Irish call to mind the jest in cricket circles some years ago when the Middlesex eleven included a large proportion of players recruited from the other end of the world; it was said that one could qualify for Middlesex by drinking a glass of beer at Charing Cross.

H. G.

The Liturgical Use of the Organ. By Godfrey Sceats.

[*Musical Opinion Office*, 3s.]

One may easily escape an organist's in- and out-voluntaries by the simple expedient of arriving just as the service starts and leaving the moment it ends. But during the service he has us at his mercy, and only the deaf are spared the various little bits of filling-in that he is so often called on to supply. This is a misfortune, because so many players are at their best in the voluntary and recital and a good deal short of it during the service. The anomaly would not exist if it were merely a matter of keyboard technique; it is something far more difficult to inculcate—a sense of style and fitness. Mr. Sceats deals with the organ as a solo instrument in connection with a liturgical office. This rules out accompanying and recitals, and leaves the interlude and the voluntary. The interlude is a feature that is becoming more and more important, owing to the increasing number of churches at which the choral Eucharist is sung at least weekly. At such churches, too, *Magnificat* is usually sung with full ceremonial, and this frequently calls for a good deal of resource on the part of the organist. Mr. Sceats discusses the voluntary first, and rightly shows that though it is not an essential it may easily be made a valuable adjunct. An increasing number of people in the nave are beginning to feel that a voluntary has to do more than justify itself on the purely musical side. It should as often as possible be appropriate as well as good, and it will be appropriate in the most natural way when it is based on an ecclesiastical theme, and above all when this thematic basis is a feature in the service to which it forms the postlude. Failing such fitness the least we can do is to play music in which, as Mr. Sceats says, there is as a rule ‘no violent assertion of rhythm—especially conventional march rhythm, or three-four rhythm.’ He tells us, too, to avoid ‘everything showy, and to use sparingly, or never, music which consists of a melody on a solo stop of orchestral timbre with an accompaniment of arpeggi or staccato chords,’ and not many will disagree with him. Everything points to various forms of the choral prelude as the best material for voluntary purposes. The term is a comprehensive one, as it includes all the music based on ecclesiastical themes, whether plainsong, chorale, psalm tune, or modern hymn tune. As Mr. Sceats says, the supply of good music of this kind is so large that an organist need have no difficulty in going on playing his way through the Church seasons with something appropriate all the time. Mr. Sceats gives lists of suitable material. These lists might with advantage have been fuller and more detailed for the benefit of organists who live a long way from well-stocked music shops. (By the by, he includes Herbert Howells among the English composers who have written preludes on psalm tunes, but Howells's *Three Psalm-Preludes* are independent pieces treating verses from the Psalter, and have no connection with psalm tunes.) Mr. Sceats mentions two collections by Parry; a third set of *Three Chorale Fantasias* on ‘St. Anne,’ the ‘Old Hundredth,’ and an 18th century tune is too good to be neglected. The list of pieces on plainsong themes could be amplified a good deal. It is true that Mr. Sceats does not profess to be exhaustive, but the value of a work of this kind depends so much on completeness that it is