

Review

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meeting was devoted to competitions for prizes and certificates in various branches of musical skill. There were in all sixty competitors, and prizes to the amount of £17 were distributed.

The second concert of the Brixton Choral Society for the present season was given on Monday the 10th ult., when, in addition to a well selected number of part-songs, two Cantatas were performed, the first being Van Bree's "St. Cecilia's Day," and the second the seasonable work by Mr. Macfarren called "Christmas." Space will not allow us to discuss the merits of the performance; but the whole programme was gone through with great success. Two choruses in "St. Cecilia's Day" were repeated, by the general request of the audience, and the Chorale, "Incense odours," with harmonium accompaniment, was highly effective. Every praise must be awarded to Mr. Lemare, the energetic conductor, for the great pains he evidently takes in the training of the choir, and for his endeavours to realise the composer's ideas, and to put their works before the public in so satisfactory a manner. The solos were given by Madlle. Romanelli, Miss Ellen Dix, and Mr. Rogers. The chorus was not quite so numerous as at the former concert; but great improvement was perceptible in the style of singing. Mr. J. Harrison was, as usual, at the pianoforte. Mr. Arthur Sullivan's Oratorio, "The Prodigal Son," is to be given at the next concert.

A *Soirée musicale* was given on Monday, the 17th ult., at Norfolk House, Bayswater, under the direction of Mr. Lansdowne Cottell, which was well attended. Some excellent part-songs were given, together with some solo singing and pianoforte pieces. Miss Emily Blanche was encored in "Away from dear Erin," and Miss A. Dwight in Venzano's "A che assorto." Miss Janet Cadogan sang "To the woods" well, and Madlle. Marie Christine's "I'm a fisher-maiden" was effectively rendered. Mr. C. J. Bishenden in "'Tis jolly to hunt," and Mr. George Taylor in "Why breathe that sigh," were loudly applauded. Some pianoforte solos, played by Miss Evans, Fraulein Jamuska, Madlle. Mardon, and M. C. F. Webber, attracted much attention. Mr. L. Cottell presided as conductor.

THE Annual Report of the Birmingham Amateur Harmonic Association, presented at the meeting on the 21st December, shows that the balance in hand at the close of last year has not been diminished, notwithstanding a considerably increased expenditure during the present year, and that there is a continued accession to the number of its members. Several works of importance have been given by the Society; and there is every reason to hope that, with the cordial co-operation of the members, and the support of the music-loving public, the future prosperity of this valuable Association may be permanently insured.

M. Lefébure Wély, the celebrated French organist and composer, died during the past month, at the age of fifty-three. M. Ambroise Thomas delivered a funeral oration at the grave.

Reviews.

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

1. *Six Preludes and Fugues for the Organ.*
2. *Seven Preludes and Fugues for the Organ.*
3. *Six Short Preludes for the Organ.* Composed by the Rev. Sir Frederick A. Gore Ouseley, Bart.

THAT fugue writing is to a certain extent a work of calculation is a fact which we suppose requires no proof. But, on the other hand, it is also equally certain that great musicians have not unfrequently succeeded in making such dry bones live. This was, however, most frequently the case at the time when musicians thought in fugue; when the notion of writing a chorus that was not at the least full of fugal points would hardly ever be entertained. Mendelssohn, who was exceptional in almost

everything, was exceptional in this. Without being one of those to whom double counterpoint suggested itself with a natural spontaneity, he was able so far to enter into the spirit of the ancient writers—at the same time retaining his own individuality—as to revivify the old forms, rendering them not only tolerable, but beautiful to modern ears. Even he, however, grew to doubt the propriety of the process; and began in his later days to free himself from the trammels of pedantry.

As we have just said, these trammels were not felt in earlier times, because fugal forms were then the natural expression of the musicians of that day. For a similar reason we are bound to regard the Preludes and Fugues now under notice as more than mere exercises. It is impossible for any one, after a careful examination of these works, to come to the conclusion that they have been deliberately composed in fulfilment of a self-imposed task; the evidences of spontaneity are too numerous. If we look at the subjects we find that they assert an individuality through all the intricacies of the fugues. The counter-subjects, too, with a character almost as marked in a different way, unite harmoniously with the subjects, yet at the same time retain their individuality throughout. The episodes are natural and interesting, almost invariably springing from some portion of the subject or counter-subject. Then we have the subject inverted, augmented, and diminished: the *pedale*, and, last of all, the *stretto*, close, compact, and intricate, and with all this, perfect naturalness and unflagging interest.

In a case like this, where abstruse forms are invested with true musical feeling, we should fail in our duty were we not honestly to state our conviction that such works do infinite credit to the English school of composition, no less than to their distinguished composer. And we do not hesitate to say, that were young organ students put to these Preludes and Fugues as soon as they have gone through Schneider's Organ School, instead of breaking their hearts against the difficulties of Bach, we should soon witness a marked difference in the extra finish and completeness of organ-playing in this country.

The National Anthem, with variations for the Organ. Composed by Samuel Sebastian Wesley.

THE works of this eminent cathedral organist and composer are always distinguished by something either daringly original or large in idea, and not unfrequently both. His great Service in E, and the majority of his anthems, offer abundant evidence of this. Hardly less so does the work under notice. It is undoubtedly difficult to play, and requires an instrument of large resources to do it justice; but we believe there is no lack of good organists or large organs in this country. We cannot therefore doubt that it will be extensively used.

Te Deum Laudamus. Composed by Charles Edward Noverre.

THERE is so much modern feeling in this setting of the *Te Deum*, that we are rather surprised to find the notation altogether ancient. It is almost amusing to see the phrase—

Day | by | day | we | mag- | -ni- | -fy | Thee; |

spaced out so that each syllable has an entire bar to itself; and more especially when we consider that each bar is of short duration. This, however we suppose, may be considered to a great extent a mere matter of taste. What is more certain is that Mr. Noverre has written a good *Te Deum*, which gives promise of better things.

An Evening Service in the Key of D. By Dr. Bunnett.

WE fear Dr. Bunnett has hardly done himself justice in this little composition. In his evident desire to be simple, he has become inane. When we state that nearly every phrase begins and ends in the key of the tonic, it will suffice to indicate a want of variety, add to which we look in vain for any gleam of freshness or latent power.

The Nicene Creed. For voices in unison. Composed by Charles H. Morgan.

To lovers of Marbecke's setting of the office of the Holy