

Review

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whose means will not allow them to purchase expensive pictures a few well-executed engravings of original works recall most pleasurable recollections in a room; and on the same principle, in these days of cheap music, may we reproduce in our house miniature representations of those great compositions which have so frequently delighted us out of it. How often have we heard the very works mentioned by the author of this volume as unsuited for home representation given in a drawing-room, with merely a pianoforte accompaniment; and how much solid pleasure has been afforded, even to trained musicians, by such performances. In passing through this volume, we seem to be sitting by the side of a thoroughly accomplished artist, who is ready and willing to talk with us upon music in a manner we can all understand, and to sympathise with all the difficulties which stand in our way of introducing it in its most intellectual aspect into our homes. Without a tinge of pedantry, he gives us just enough of the history of the art as he finds necessary for his purpose; and if occasionally we are warned off attempting the practice of certain compositions, he furnishes us with a very sufficient reason for his advice. For instance, in speaking of the male "countertenor" voice, he frankly states that, although its compass is almost the same as that of the deep female voice, the "difference in quality of the two voices presents an impediment to their employment on the same music." Some "equal voice" glees, he says, have been recently rearranged with a view to their being sung by a mixed choir (soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass), but that "it must be admitted they lose much of their effect when so performed." Of course this fact shuts out from us many of the old glees, if we wish to sing them as their composers intended; but the modern "part-song" more than supplies us with an equivalent for their loss. As our author says, the real credit of the introduction of this fine species of composition "must be awarded to the Germans, who, in their 'war of liberation,' employed it as a potent means for raising and maintaining patriotic fervour. Weber's settings of Körner's lyrics are some amongst the earliest and best of these soul-stirring effusions. They are all for male voices, in 'close harmony,' the parts shoulder to shoulder, as those who sang them would have stood to receive a charge of cavalry; short, clear, outspoken utterances, and simple enough to be learnt by heart, and sung without books, on the march, or round the table." The number of such works, both for mixed and male choirs, has now so enormously multiplied that the most exacting and skilful body of amateur vocalists need be at no loss for material upon which to exercise their talents; and Dr. Hullah mentions many composers who have contributed largely the finest specimens of part-music suitable for our domestic libraries. We are glad to see the observations about what is termed the "paucity of contraltos." The real truth is that the ladies like to sing "first parts" without any reference to the quality of voice they may happen to possess; and, as our author says "to this day the performance of a contralto or 'second' part is regarded, how ignorantly and foolishly every musician knows, as requiring less skill than that of a soprano." In proof of this we recollect a young singer with a low voice who declared to us that she was "not going to sing second to anybody," and who consequently, when choral music was going on, either became a listener or attempted the execution of a part entirely out of her compass. There can be no question that the recent fashion of ladies studying instruments so long considered "unfeminine" will be the commencement of an entire revolution in the performance of music "in the house." "There is an Oxford tradition," says Dr. Hullah, "that at an amateur concert about the year 1827 the performance of the first male pianist that had been seen in that university was rewarded with a storm of hisses. The pianoforte was then regarded as essentially a woman's instrument." Here is undeniable proof that custom becomes a tyrant to intellectual progress; and it is the duty therefore of all ladies who can think for themselves to aid the movement now inaugurated, and show us that domestic instrumental music for stringed instruments can be cultivated to perfection in families without the aid of kind brothers or condescending male friends.

*The Parochial Psalter, Pointed for Chanting.* By Alexander S. Cooper. [Weekes and Co.]

THE title-page says that this Psalter is pointed "upon a new and simple system." We turn over two pages, and the author says in his preface "the work does not lay claim to any great originality or ingenuity." We confess that we are puzzled as to how these two statements can be harmonised. How can pointing be on a *new system*, and yet not be original? If it is not original it certainly cannot be new; and if it claims to be new, it clearly by doing so claims the credit of originality. Of the two statements, we think the one in the author's preface is the nearer to the truth. We have to blame Mr. Cooper for not being even less original than he is, because he directs a slight *stress* on the accented syllable of recitation, whereas the best authorities have long utterly condemned the *emphasis* as being neither required by words nor music. For example the stress is directed to be made in Psalm lxxxviii. 9, on the last syllable of the word "faileth." Does Mr. Cooper seriously think a good reader would say, "My sight faileth?" or, to take a few examples, "Dost thou show wonders?" or, "The singers also, and trumpeters?" or "loving-kindness?"

*A Dream.* (Ein Traum.) For the Pianoforte; by Aug. Moosmair. [Simpson and Co.]

As the name of this composer is new to us, we regret that we have not made his acquaintance through the medium of a piece of somewhat higher class than that before us. They say that dreams are seldom worth relating, and it appears to us that Mr. Moosmair's musical vision is scarcely any exception to the rule. An exceedingly commonplace subject, with an accompaniment devoid of any novelty in character, such as we have presented to us in this "Dream," can hardly provoke any severely adverse criticism, especially as there is a gracefulness in the passages which must always command respect; and when we say, therefore, that the composition offends not by any violation of grammatical law, we have no doubt given as much praise as the author could possibly anticipate.

*Un Moment de Joie.* Souvenir pour Piano; par Felix Otto Dessoff. [W. G. Hallifax and Co.]

THIS graceful little sketch, marked "Allegretto con espressione," is scarcely perhaps sufficiently joyful to justify its title, but it is in every respect a thoroughly musician-like trifle. The opening theme appears to us a little too much harmonised, considering its simple character; but one great merit in the piece is that when the composer has said what he has to say he leaves off. We have so much over-elaboration in many of our "drawing-room" compositions that we gladly welcome a *Bagatelle* which does not profess to be anything else.

*In our Boat.* Song; with Violin or Violoncello and Pianoforte accompaniment. Poetry by Miss Muloch. Composed by A. C. Mackenzie. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

IT is assuredly unusual to publish an accompaniment for a violin or violoncello, but Mr. Mackenzie has so carefully written this part for each instrument that it is difficult to say upon which it would be the more effective. The song is extremely melodious, and the accompaniment in good keeping with the character of the words, some points of imitation materially increasing the interest of the composition, without being unduly obtrusive. The violin or violoncello part, being completely independent of the pianoforte accompaniment, is of course essential to realise the design of the composer, but the song *could* be sung with the piano alone. As violins, however, are now becoming household instruments, we have no doubt that Mr. Mackenzie's charming little composition will be performed in many drawing-rooms in all its integrity; and should it find its way into sympathetic hands, we can safely guarantee its success.

*Eyes so blue.* Song. Words by O. H. Davies, B.A. Music by Ciro Pinsuti. [Ricordi.]

THIS is one of the most fascinating little vocal pieces we have yet seen from the pen of this composer, and if it do not