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The Glen Collection of Scottish Dance Music. Arranged for Pianoforte by John Glen.

[Edinburgh: J. Glen.]

THIS volume contains 144 examples of Strathspeys, Reels, and Jigs, selected from the various collections published in Scotland up to the year 1784—here spoken of as “The Gow Era”—and is to be followed by a second, dealing with those published from 1784 to 1792. The author claims to have rescued from neglect many tunes which deserve to be better known; but to our thinking the interest of the book centres on the twenty pages (folio size) of historical, biographical, and bibliographical matter which precede the music, and which include reduced fac-similes of the title pages of the nine earliest known collections—viz., Bremner's (1757), Stewart's (1761), Riddell's, Dow's, Campbell's, McGlashan's, Cumming's, Ross's, and W. Marshall's. An alphabetical list of about 700 tunes, to each of which is appended the name of the collection in which it first appeared, is one of the features for which collectors who add Mr. Glen's volume to their libraries will have most reason to feel grateful.

Twenty-four Songs by Tchaikowsky.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

AMONG modern Russian composers Tchaikowsky occupies a distinguished place, and his works include sonatas, concertos, symphonies, and operas. Some of these have been heard in England, but it is by his short pianoforte pieces and songs for one or more voices that his name has become so familiar to us. One must not, of course, infer from this that the works of smaller calibre are of greater merit; but they appeal to a wide circle and are constantly being played or sung, while the opportunities of hearing the orchestral or stage compositions are few and far between. The songs, however, fully deserve their reputation. And the reason of this is not far to seek. There is, in most cases, a freshness and spontaneity about the melodies which at once secures a welcome for them, and they frequently display a languid character and melancholy charm, characteristic of national Russian music, and specially attractive to the ear. Then again the composer's deep knowledge of harmony enables him to set off those melodies to the best advantage. It often happens that through poverty of melodic invention clever writing and effective harmonic colouring appear as an end rather than as a means. But Tchaikowsky starts with something to say, and any skill shown in expressing his thoughts renders them only more intense. The influence both of Schumann and Chopin is frequently felt, but in a natural, healthy manner. Among so much that is interesting it is difficult to make a selection, but we would name “Why so pale are the roses” for its mournful meandering accompaniment, and “The song that you sang long ago” for its gentle melody and plaintive, sighing accompaniment; also the dainty “What matters?” the quaint “The Czar's Drinking House,” and the characteristic “Spanish Serenade.” The English translation is from the well-known pen of Lady Macfarren.

English County Songs. Words and Music collected and edited by Lucy E. Broadwood and J. A. Fuller-Maitland.

[Leadenhall Press, 1893.]

THIS collection shows a great deal of knowledge and research, but we doubt if the songs themselves are, as a rule, worth the trouble they have given. Some few are, however, very quaint and pretty, as “Farewell, my joy,” and “My bonnie, bonnie boy,” and others; but a large number are merely variants of melodies already known, and are evidently not the best readings. The most interesting part of the book to us has been the words and music of the children's songs; in these and in the local versions of several of our best known carols the antiquary will find much which will repay study. The accompaniments to the songs are all that could be desired, sufficient to support the voice, and without that attempt at independence which mars so many similar works. Mr. Fuller-Maitland and the friends who have helped him in his laborious task are deserving of great credit for this valuable addition to the literature of English folk-songs.

The Parish Choir Book. Nos. 134-138.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE first of these numbers is a setting of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis by William Spark. It is in D major, and is written for voices in unison. The general style is melodious and flowing, with effective modulations, and the accompaniment is frequently independent. The next is another setting of the same Canticles, and in the same key, by Berthold Tours, jun. Here, however, resemblance ends, for Mr. Tours writes in four-part harmony, and with much boldness and energy, the verses commencing “He hath showed strength” being treated with special vigour. This is a very effective, but by no means difficult service. No. 136 is a simple setting of the Te Deum in G, by J. Stainer. It is marked “to be sung chantwise and not in strict time.” If it was Sir John Stainer's intention to write a service in which a congregation may easily join, he has certainly succeeded. The next number contains a Kyrie Eleison and Nicene Creed in F, by T. Tallis Trimmell. The voice parts are mostly in unison, and, musically speaking, the version is tuneful and pleasing, but the composer sacrifices the accent, and sometimes the sense of the words to his rhythmic periods. An intelligent choirmaster, however, could easily make the necessary corrections without injury to the music. No. 138 is a setting of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in B flat, by W. A. C. Cruickshank. It is in four-part harmony, and is written in a quiet, flowing style, eminently churchlike. Purists may object to the consecutive octaves in the sixth bar of page 6, but they are obviously intentional, and the effect is by no means unpleasant.

Album of Twenty Songs. With German and English words. The English version by Gwendolen Gore. Music by Jacques Blumenthal. [Boosey and Co.]

IN this volume the popular composer has given us of his very best, the result being a series of delightful examples of the musician's art, especially that difficult branch of it—making “music and sweet poetry agree.” Good singers will do well to take note of this Album; they will find in it the wherewithal to gratify moods the most varied and tastes the most diversified; melodies full of charm and expression, accompaniments brilliant and interesting, harmonies rich and refined. The words of the songs, it should be added, are far above average merit, the German originals being from the pens of well-known poets.

Sintomi d'Amore; Allora ed Ora. By Pietro Mascagni.

[E. Ascherberg and Co.]

No indication is afforded as to whether these two songs are recent compositions or early efforts of the still young, but already famous Italian composer; but, at any rate, they are replete with the characteristics, not to say mannerisms, which mark the scores of “Cavalleria Rusticana,” “L'amico Fritz,” and “I Rantzau.” In the “Symptoms of Love” the time measurement is changed constantly from two-four to three-four, and the same remark will apply to “Then and now,” which is the more impassioned ditty of the two. Whether much is gained by these rhythmical eccentricities is a moot point; at any rate, these romances could not fail to prove effective if sung with the requisite expression, in other words, abandonment. They have Italian and English words, the former by G. Ferruzzi and V. Valle, and the latter by A. Ramsay.

Part-Song Book (second series). Nos. 639-645.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS publication grows apace, proof being thus afforded of the undiminished popularity of part-singing in this country. A few lines will suffice respecting the present seven numbers. The first is “Bright be thy dreams,” an extremely simple and almost hymn-like setting of Thomas Moore's familiar stanza, by Oliver King. The next two are