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The Music of the Poets. A Musicians' Birthday Book by Eleonore d'Esterre-Keeling
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space for mention of many, if obscure, workers in the cause of Art hitherto passed over by writers of biography."

As to the plan of the book. The authors of necessity have had to present their information in as concise a form as possible, by merely giving dates of birth and death, parentage, sphere of work, appointments, &c., followed by a list of works. We have pleasure in recording the thoroughness with which this has been carried out, whereby the "Biography" becomes indispensable as a book of reference. The selection of names is very comprehensive. It seems somewhat strange to see the names of the "Great Vance" (whose real name was Stevens, Mr. George Leybourne, of "Champagne Charlie" fame (if it can be called fame), and other music-hall singers (or is it "artistes"?) mingled with those of Purcell, Sterndale Bennett, and S. S. Wesley; but here they are. Moreover, as further showing the wide scope of the book, certain amateurs are also included, one of whom combines the occupations of clothier and precentor.

It is inevitable that, in spite of every care and scrutiny, mistakes are bound to creep into pages crowded with a mass of detail. We have noticed a few such errors, one or two of which we may refer to as being important. Goring Thomas was born in 1850, not in 1851, as is wrongly stated nearly everywhere. The late Dr. Henry Wylde started the London Academy of Music in 1861, not in 1871. The excellent primer on "Violin Makers" is by Sir John Stainer's daughter, and not by his son; and to the clever, industrious young lady should be all the praise. The biography of the Rev. Fleetwood Sheppard is, we fear, mixed up with that of the Rev. Edgar Sheppard, the Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal, St. James's. The Argyll Rooms were situated in Regent Street, not in the Strand (p. 189). We should be glad to know the authority for stating that Dr. Blow was really born at Westminster.

In justice to the industrious and painstaking authors of this "Biography," we most sincerely hope that their unwearied labours will meet with due reward. We cordially commend the book—which is published at half-a-guinea—to the consideration of our readers.

Novello's Short Anthems. Nos. 69—87.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

SIR JOHN STAINER has certainly enriched this series of Church music by his contributions, which extend from No. 69 to No. 75 inclusive, and are primarily intended for the Advent season. The first of them, entitled "O Wisdom," may be described as a brief and prayerful meditation on the advantages of knowledge, and the nature of the text is admirably reflected in the music, which is written throughout in four parts. No. 70, "O Lord and Ruler," starts with a bold phrase given out in unison by the whole choir, forming an impressive contrast to the supplicating nature of the second section of the anthem. The *Finale* is particularly effective. "O Root of Jesse" (No. 71) is similar in form and character. No. 72, "O Key of David," also opens with a vigorous unison passage. It makes more demands upon its executants than the two preceding examples, but will well repay any extra care devoted to its study. "O Day-Spring" (No. 73) is remarkable for the grace of its melodiousness. "O King, and Desire of all Nations" (No. 74), is the most extended of the series. It possesses considerable vigour of a reverent kind, and the changes of sentiment are admirably enforced by the music. The conclusion, with the word "come" prolonged *pianissimo* on the dominant, is deeply impressive. No. 75, "O Emmanuel," is dignified and devotional, and worthily concludes a set which will, doubtless, find wide acceptance during the forthcoming Advent season. Great interest also attaches to the following six numbers, which consist of arrangements for four vocal parts, by Dr. Charles Steggall, of Mendelssohn's six anthems originally written for an eight-part chorus for the Cathedral at Berlin. These works are too well-known to Church musicians to call for detailed description, but it may be said that the chief characteristics of the original form have been carefully preserved in Dr. Steggall's version, and that No. 76 is suitable for Christmas, No. 77 for the beginning of the year, No. 78 for Ascension-tide, Nos. 79 and 81 for the Lenten season, and No. 80 for

Advent. "I heard a voice from Heaven" (No. 82) is taken from Dr. G. M. Garrett's first Service in D and is suitable as an introit. "The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants" (No. 83), by J. Baptiste Calkin, is also derived from a Service in G by its composer. It opens with a brief solo passage for a bass voice, the melody of which is subsequently taken up by the choir in four-part harmony. The next number, "O send out Thy light," is by the same composer and is taken from his Service in B flat. The tenors are divided into two parts in sundry passages and the anthem calls for careful singing, but it will present few difficulties to a fairly experienced choir. No. 85 is an earnest setting, by Thomas Adams, of lines from the first and second verses of the second chapter of the first epistle of St. John. No. 86, "I heard a voice from Heaven," by Alan Gray, is specially suitable for memorial services and is an excellent example of how much variety can be introduced into the somewhat restricted form of this series of anthems. In No. 87, "The steps of a good man," Mr. F. Cambridge has written at greater length, but the work is a simple and cheerful anthem quite in keeping with the spirit of its companions.

The Music of the Poets. A musicians' birthday book. Compiled by Eleonore d'Esterre-Keeling.

[Walter Scott, Limited.]

THERE is a little known birthday-book story of Rubinstein. The great pianist gave a recital at some provincial English town, at the close of which he repaired to the ante-room and found the table covered with open books. "What are these?" the great Anton asked. "Birthday books for you to sign your name," was the reply, on hearing which he, with one sweep of his arm, hurled them all on to the floor. But we are not all Rubinsteins, and thus we endure the birthday book, even if we are asked by some winsome maiden to "sign our name as usual, so that no one can read it; it's all the more fun." The plan of this attractively got-up book is, under each day of the year, to record the birthday of some eminent musician, or musicians, followed by a poetic quotation or a musical extract from their works, sometimes, as in the natal days of Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Professor Stanford, in *fac-simile*. The opposite (right hand) page is left blank for the signatures of other celebrities or otherwise. The book, which is dedicated to M. Paderewski and contains twelve full-page portraits of celebrated musicians, is admirably suited for a present or school prize.

Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung, and the conditions of Ideal Manhood. By David Irvine.

[H. Grevel and Co.]

The Epic of Sounds: an Elementary Interpretation of Wagner's Nibelungen Ring. By Freda Winworth.

[Simpkin, Marshall.]

THE Wagner literature has already attained to portentous dimensions, and yet there seems to be no diminution of the output. Unlike other great composers, Wagner has provided much material for various writers and commentators wherewith to discourse upon—his music, his literary productions, and his philosophy all being pregnant with profound thoughts. Both the books before us treat of the famous "Ring" in a comprehensive and appreciative manner. Mr. Irvine conveniently divides his volume of nearly 300 pages into the following chapters: "The Problem—The Characters—Biographical—The Drama—The Music." In his opening paragraph the author boldly states that there are some pronounced Wagnerites who are not Wagnerian enough. Here are his words:—"Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* has not yet got beyond the bounds of ignorant, irrelevant criticism. Even from some of the undoubted adherents to the Wagner cause, a sop is thrown to the watch dog of conventional morality when defending the *Ring* from critics with nothing to lose, no cause to uphold, no genius round whom to gather. It is useless to discuss seriously the import of Wagner's drama with these critics." Those who unfortunately are not "adherents" are told that "Anti-Wagnerism is not troubled with either coherency or consistency. It is like the perpetual tuning of an orchestra,