

Review

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to "Die Zauberpfeife," excerpts from "Rosamunde," Miriam's "Siegesgesang," and many other choral numbers, amongst them, curiously enough in the case of so prolific a composer as Schubert, one or two which had also formed part of the preceding Concert. A feature on this occasion was the performance, on the part of Fräulein Caroline Geisler-Schubert, a grand-niece of the composer, of the grand Sonata in G. On the 4th ult. a special Schubert Chamber Concert was given, in the small hall of the Musikverein, by the famous quartet parties of Herren Hellmesberger and Rosé, when, amongst others, the Quartets in D minor and G major obtained a hearing. Herr Gustav Walter, who long since has made the interpretation of Schubert's *Lieder* his special province, was the vocalist. On the same day a "People's Concert" had been organised by Dr. Felix Kraus, one of the few truly "popular" undertakings on a large scale of the series taking place in the great hall of the Musikverein, which was completely filled. In the latter the Hellmesberger Quartet likewise took part, and the audience were most enthusiastic. At the Conservatorium a performance took place, on the 8th ult., under the direction of Dr. Fuchs. Here a number of works were produced which had seldom or never been heard in public before, such as the Overture in E minor, a duet from "Fierabras," scenes from the unfinished opera "Adrast," some minuets, "Deutsche Tänze," and other numbers. Amongst celebrations of a more intimate character may be mentioned one taking place at the house, No. 54, Nussdorfer Strasse, where the composer was born, and the art-loving owner of which, Herr Rudolf Wittmann, gave a festal entertainment on the 3rd ult. Amongst those taking part were members of the Schubertbund and of the Berlin Liedertafel, while Herr Niggli, of Aarau, the well-known musical author, contributed a number of pianoforte pieces. The most interesting and the most worthy of all these various commemorations, however, has been the Schubert Exhibition, which, relatively complete as it is, and most admirably arranged, continues to form a source of attraction and delight to the numerous music-lovers visiting the Austrian capital.

REVIEWS.

The Cross of Christ. Cantata. For Lent and Passion-tide. The words selected from the Holy Scriptures, interspersed with appropriate hymns by W. Maurice Adams. The music composed by Thomas Adams.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE multiplication of short cantatas suitable for the Church's seasons is eminently desirable, and the work by Mr. Adams is excellently designed to fulfil the requirements of the large majority of congregations. The words have been selected with good judgment, and the melodies of the hymn tunes, in which it is intended the congregation should join, are such as are quickly learnt by ear. Effective use has also been made of the ancient tonalities. The first hymn tune is "Audi benigne Conditor," and the following chorus for tenors and basses, "He shall give His angels charge over thee," is based upon the eighth tone (Rouen Mediation), fifth ending. The next number, "God is faithful," is written for soprano solo and chorus, and is of a flowing and graceful character. Two hymns, and a recitative for a bass voice, bring the work to the point where it is suggested an address should be given. After this the music is resumed by an impressively harmonised hymn, and a very graceful duet for soprano and tenor, "God will provide," occurs shortly afterwards. Another effective number is a quartet for male voices, "Come unto me." The favourite lines "Nearer, my God, to Thee," are set in an appropriately devotional manner for soprano and tenor soli and chorus, and the work concludes with a hymn of a bright character. The part-writing is simple, but possesses musical interest, and is calculated to sustain the attention of the choristers, while at the same time it will present no difficulties to choirs of average attainments.

Victoria; or, the Bard's Prophecy. A Dramatic Cantata for soli and chorus, with orchestral accompaniment. The words written by the Rev. Charles Kent. The music composed by G. F. Huntley.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS cantata has been especially written for performance by a choir of 4,500 voices at the Crystal Palace, on May 8 next, when will take place what will doubtless prove one of the most memorable celebrations of the unique reign of our Queen. These circumstances have to be taken into consideration in reviewing this cantata, for it is obvious that they dictate very distinctly the character both of the words and of the music. The former must be patriotic in sentiment, and the latter must be of a kind that will prove effective when executed by an exceptionally large body of vocalists. Above all, there must be bold and impressive contrast. How fully these requirements have been met can only be entirely estimated when the music has been heard under the conditions for which it was written, but it may at once be said that both librettist and composer seem to have keenly felt the peculiar needs they were called upon to supply, and it may be added that in several instances they have undoubtedly succeeded. No finer contrast could be presented in a nation's history than the comparison presented by the stalwart Britons, under their heroic Queen Boadicea, struggling against the Roman invader, and the imperial greatness our country has acquired in the reign of our present Queen. This appreciation of contrast is also shown in the sentiment of the individual numbers, and also in the variation of metre. There is, moreover, in some of the lines a genuine ring of patriotism which should stir the pulse of every Englishman, as in the following:—

England, glorious England,
Bright jewel of the sea,
Across the trackless foam have sailed
Thy sons to victory;
Unloos'd the chains of slavery
From many a fetter'd hand,
And banished superstition
From many a darkened land.
Glorious is thy mission,
Immortal, born on high—
The angels strike their harps of gold
And laud thee thro' the sky.

The work opens after a few bars of instrumental introduction with a semi-chorus for soprano and alto, who represent the women and children calling upon the warriors to awake as the foe is in sight. This leads into an animated full chorus and general call to arms. The women and children subsequently sing a prayerful number of melodious character, chiefly written in two-part harmony, and the arrival of Boadicea again provides an admirable contrast. The part of the outraged Queen is set for a mezzo-soprano, and clever use is made of the alternation of common and triple time in the music in her agitated recital of the wrongs she has suffered from the invaders. An impressive chorus for tenors and basses in unison relates the mystic rites of the Druids, and is followed by "The Bard's Prophecy," which is set as a tenor solo with harp accompaniment. This number is written in a flowing style and very effectively laid out for the voice. The battle-cry of the Romans, "Cæsar et Victoria," is heard in the distance and is followed by several dramatic numbers, which bring the first part to an effective close. Part two opens with the "Commemoration Festival of Queen Victoria's long reign," the second number in which will probably prove one of the most popular of the work, being a chorus in unison for female voices in *tempo di gavotta*. The introduction of St. George, assigned to a bass voice, who announces that "England's island story has won approval in the realms above," infuses new interest into the development, and leads to the chorus "England, glorious England," the most important choral number of the work, and in which the composer has manifestly put forth his full strength. The result is a movement which, by reason of the appropriateness of the means employed, appeals to the musician, and from the boldness of its progressions should prove equally attractive to the uncultured listener. Some choral numbers for female voices follow, and effectively prepare the way for the final chorus. The first bar of the introduction to this gives the figures 1897—that is to say, the melody consists of the

keynote followed by its octave, ninth, and seventh. By a curious coincidence these notes are practically identical with the opening of the national anthem, an accident of which excellent use is made in the subsequent choral number. Although the chief part of the music is of a diatonic character, and frequent use is made of unison, the part-writing possesses much independence, and musician-like recourse is frequently made to contrapuntal devices, notably in the chorus "England, glorious England," in which a ground bass is impressively reiterated for sixteen bars. It is hardly necessary to add that the work is admirably suited to choral societies, both small and great, by whom its performance this year would be peculiarly appropriate and could scarcely fail to be attractive.

Victoria—Our Queen! March for full orchestra. By John E. West.

Imperial March. By Edward Elgar. Op. 32.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

JOYOUS marches will, of course, be much in demand as the "Diamond" celebrations approach, and the attention of musical directors may be drawn to the two examples above-mentioned. The first is founded on themes from the late Sir Joseph Barnby's "Patriotic" chorus and is arranged for pianoforte solo. The brief introduction savours of Wagner in a slight degree, but the spirited principal theme, in E flat, is bold and thoroughly English in character. Later on the music becomes more elaborate, but although clear in design and not difficult to play, the March comes to a most jubilant and triumphant conclusion.

Mr. Elgar's March is wholly original, and is well worthy of the composer, who wrote two of the most successful works produced at last year's autumnal festivals. It is in the key of B flat and is in strict march form—that is to say, a principal section, followed by a so-called trio in the subdominant key, and then a recapitulation. Very strong rhythm is preserved throughout, and the style is distinctly modern and free, but without lawlessness. The march would assuredly prove effective if rendered by an orchestra, the present edition being for pianoforte solo only.

The Queen's Song. By Eaton Faning.
All hail the Glorious Reign. By Frederic H. Cowen.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

WITH words supplied by such an eloquent poet as Sir Edwin Arnold, it would have been strange indeed if Mr. Eaton Faning had failed to do justice to his reputation, and he has certainly sustained it in the present instance. The two compositions above-named form Nos. 764 and 778 of Novello's Part-Song Book. The first is very vigorous, and the principal refrain is most inspiring. There is an alternative section of a more placid and peaceful nature, and the words of this are prayerful.

Mr. Cowen's composition is styled a Commemoration Ode for chorus and orchestra, or for unaccompanied chorus, the joyous words being from the pen of Mr. Clifton Bingham. The piece is very similar in character to the last-named, and the two might well be bracketed in programmes of orchestral concerts.

Twelve Hymns with Tunes. Suitable for use at Services held in commemoration of the Queen's long reign.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS is a handy little publication in ordinary hymn-book size, and it should be specially noted that the words and music are, in most instances, new. The verses are by esteemed authors, including the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, the Rev. W. J. Ferrar, Mr. Francis T. Palgrave, the Rev. Bernard Reynolds, and the very Rev. the Dean of Rochester. Some of them are beautiful in idea and expression, but we will not be invidious and make comparisons. With regard to the music, it would be difficult to collect a stronger list of names. Among the most effective tunes are those to "Children, send a song of praise," by C. H. Lloyd; "English hearts and English voices," by Walter Parratt; "From the deep heart of our people," by A. C. Mackenzie, somewhat in the olden style; "Happy children we have been," by Arthur Sullivan; "Let all the land with one accord," by Haydn Keeton; and "O King of kings,"

by J. F. Bridge. These tunes are some of the best, but all are good, and the whole series might well be sung at the Services of song which are likely to be numerous in June next. The other composers included are Joseph Barnby, Battison Haynes, G. C. Martin, and J. H. Maunder.

Of Winter Blossoms. Song. Words by Mrs. Fuller Maitland. Music by Catherine Adelaide Ranken.
[E. Ascherberg and Co.]

SOME poetical and dainty lines have been set in a most pleasing and sympathetic manner in this song, which may be warmly recommended to cultured soprano and tenor vocalists. The little ditty is pre-eminently one to which the quotation "Short and sweet," in its best sense, may be aptly applied.

Caprice for Pianoforte and Violin (or Flute). By Kate Willis. [Charles Woolhouse.]

MISS WILLIS has written a melodious Andante which amateur violinists, with a moderate amount of executive facility, will find a pleasing medium for the display of their power of expression and skill. The pianoforte part is simple, but by no means devoid of interest.

MUSIC IN BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT).

THE Festival Choral Society gave, on the 4th ult., Dvorák's dramatic cantata "The Spectre's Bride," Dr. Hubert Parry's exquisite choral setting of Milton's Ode "Blest Pair of Sirens," and Schumann's Pianoforte Concerto in A minor (Op. 54). Dr. C. Swinnerton Heap appeared on that occasion in a dual capacity—that of conductor and pianist. The revival of "The Spectre's Bride," after a lapse of eleven years, came upon the audience as a revelation, and was followed with the keenest interest. The performance was a magnificent one and showed the most careful preparation on all sides. The principals—Miss Ella Russell, Mr. Edward Branscombe, and Mr. Bantock Pierpoint—discharged their duties with the utmost satisfaction. Dr. Parry's "Blest Pair of Sirens" was rendered by the choir with wonderful tone-power and precision, and, in my opinion, received an even better rendering than at the Festival of 1891. Dr. Heap played the Pianoforte Concerto with marked intelligence and faultless technique, the orchestral accompaniments being directed by Mr. Fred. Ward.

Mr. Stockley's Orchestral Concert, which took place on the 12th ult., included in its programme Beethoven's Symphony in C minor, the "Tannhäuser" Overture, Scharwenka's "Andante Religioso," Overture to "Athalie," a Romance for small orchestra by Mr. E. W. Rickett, a local musician, and Raff's Suite (Op. 200) for pianoforte and orchestra. The Romance is scored for strings, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and four horns, and shows considerable talent in the direction of orchestral colouring; but the composition is too restless in character, too impetuous, as if the composer intended to put a life's history into a short form. Dr. Winn played the Cavatina and the Gavotte from the Suite by Raff with scholarly conception. Mr. Meacham presided at the organ.

The Midland Musical Society gave, under Mr. H. M. Stevenson's conductorship, a praiseworthy performance of Mendelssohn's "St. Paul," which has not been heard here for many years. The performance took place in the Town Hall, on the 13th ult., and attracted a large and popular audience. The principals were Miss Maggie Jaques, Mr. Samuel Roper, Mr. William Evans, and Miss Minnie Hackett. Mr. George Halliley presided at the organ in place of Mr. C. W. Perkins, who has been indisposed for some time past and is still confined to his house.

Messrs. Harrison's third popular Concert of the current series was given in the Town Hall, on the 15th ult. The artists were Miss Ada Crossley, Mr. Edward Lloyd, and Mr. Watkin Mills, the Royal Welsh Ladies' Choir, Mr. Mark Hambourg (pianoforte), Mr. W. Henley (violin), Mr. Jean Gérardy (violoncello), and Mr. Speaight, accompanist.