

Review

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this plan there is much that is good ; but we regret that Mr. Curwen should (carrying out the theory so admirably laid down by Colonel Perronet Thompson), attempt to teach perfect intervals of the scale, instead of yielding to the division of the octave into twelve semitones, a practical method which has satisfied the exquisitely refined ears of our greatest musicians, who have themselves been performers upon keyed instruments, and which Spohr (one of the most accomplished players upon an instrument of all others capable of expressing just intonation) emphatically declares to be the only system which can be effectually reduced to practice. So decided, however, is Mr. Curwen on this point, that he will not even write his notes in a staff, because it cannot, he says, give a "correct picture" of the intervals; although it must be obvious that, even admitting the necessity of attaining perfect intonation, having first compelled his pupils to be thoroughly grounded in the real intervals, by means of his "modulator," there can be no possible reason why they should not afterwards see them written in a staff, the lines and spaces of which merely express steps of the scale, and not distances. The inventor of the "Union" notation evidently appreciates the advantage of the use of the staff, and writes his notes precisely as in the established system, with the initial letters of the intervals of the scale inside the head of the note. This appears to us most decidedly an improvement upon the Tonic Sol-fa method; for it represents the ascent or descent of the sounds, determines the interval of the scale, and will certainly lead students in a very short time to read from our present notation. The only practical objection to the use of this system in singing-classes will, we think, prove to be the difficulty of always reading the letter denoting the interval of the scale; for although in the specimens before us, it is tolerably legible in the semibreves and minims, it can scarcely be seen with sufficient clearness in the black-headed notes. Improvements, however, upon the method now adopted may still be thought of; and even in its present state—although of course it can only be looked upon as a sort of temporary compromise between two systems, rather than as a system itself—the plan is sufficiently ingenious to ensure a wide popularity.

ASHDOWN AND PARRY.

The Song of the Brook. Sketch, for the Pianoforte. By E. A. Sydenham.

We have already awarded much praise to Mr. Sydenham for the fresh and original character of most of his vocal music; but we regret we cannot conscientiously deliver the same verdict upon his pianoforte compositions, if this may be taken as a fair specimen of them. Not that we have anything whatever to say against his piece as a carefully manufactured article for drawing-room consumption—for the theme is pleasing, the arpeggios are easy to play, and the second subject, in the subdominant, is sufficiently melodious—but a more thoroughly conventional composition, in every respect, never came before us. To this, however, we should not object (for, as we have said, the piece is good of its kind), but Mr. Sydenham is a composer of whom we have had hopes; and we do not intend that he shall disappoint us without kindly and frankly telling him of it.

ROBERT COCKS AND CO.

La Vivandière. Morceau Militaire. Composé pour le Piano, par Brinley Richards.

A BRISK and melodious little piece, with sufficient military character to justify its title. Mr. Richards's Pianoforte compositions always lie well under the hand; and *La Vivandière* may lay claim not only to this important merit, but also to that of not presenting any perplexing executive difficulties.

Thy voice is near. Transcribed for the Pianoforte by Brinley Richards.

WE are always more pleased to welcome Mr. Richards in original music than in "transcriptions" of other persons'

ideas; but those who like these arrangements of popular songs may rely upon it that Mr. Wrighton's melody is treated as effectively as the hundreds of others have been by the same hand. The theme, too, is pretty; and all who long for "tune" will listen with pleasure to this piece.

The Mother's visit. Song. Words by the author of "John Halifax, Gent."

The Northern Star. Ballad. Words anonymous. Composed by Alfred Scott Gatty.

WE recollect hearing a lady, who had returned from seeing a tragedy at a theatre, declare that she cried all the evening, and never enjoyed herself so much in all her life. The composers of the majority of modern songs must, we presume, imagine that this same notion of "enjoyment" is extremely prevalent amongst the lovers of vocal music in our drawing-rooms, for certainly they do choose the most mournful subjects that can possibly be conceived. We can scarcely believe that the eternal talk about the "churchyard" can, as a rule, be welcome in a cheerful party; but we suppose that publishers know what sells best; and all we have to do, therefore, is to listen and be miserable. Mr. Gatty has, in the two songs before us, faithfully followed the fashion; for the first describes the visit of a deceased mother to her child—the apparition bending her eyes "upon the anguish" of her offspring; and the song ending with the question, "Art thou come for me?"—and the second gloomily depicts the misery of a young girl, who "wanders among the grassy graves," bewailing the loss of her lover, who has been wrecked in the "Northern Star," the melancholy fact being announced by the phrase, "The dead they cannot hear." Musically speaking, Mr. Gatty has performed his task well in both these songs. The melody of "The Mother's visit" is extremely simple; and the words are expressed throughout with much feeling. "The Northern Star" will, however, we think, become more popular, for the pathos of the little story is skilfully followed by the composer. The only objection that we have to the harmony is where the dominant seventh rises in the voice part on two fundamental chords, to the words, "I stray," in the first verse; a defect which is rather heightened on the repetition of the passage, by being made to move in fifths with the bass, although certainly one is diminished. Having on former occasions expressed a favourable opinion upon Mr. Gatty's poetical settings, we should now be pleased to greet him in something of a higher character than the lugubrious songs under notice.

C. JEFFERYS.

Cathedral Gems. For the Pianoforte.

- No. 1. *Nantes.*
- " 2. *Worms.*
- " 3. *Rotterdam.*
- " 4. *Malaga.*
- " 5. *Rouen.*
- " 6. *Caen.*

By Louis Dupuis.

THESE six pieces, like those by Felix Gantier, reviewed some time ago in the "Musical Times," are especially intended for young players, and will, we think, be found equally acceptable to teachers and pupils. No. 1 is founded on Mozart's twelfth Mass; No. 2, on Weber's Mass in G; No. 3, on Haydn's third or "Imperial" Mass; No. 4, on Beethoven's Mass in C; No. 5, on Gounod's Messe Solennelle; and No. 6, on Rossini's "Stabat Mater." They are written in the form of little Fantasias, each commencing with a short introduction. No doubt those on subjects from the "Stabat Mater," and Weber's Mass will be the most acceptable to juvenile pianists; for the themes are extremely pleasing, and it is music that "parents and guardians" can nod their heads to throughout. For ourselves, we should have preferred that such headings as "Kyrie, from 1st Mass in C," in No. 4, should not have

been given; for it leads those unacquainted with the works from which they are taken, to imagine that entire movements are extracted; and first impressions are all important in musical training. The illustrations, printed in colours, are exceedingly beautiful, especially that of the Cathedral of Rouen, in No. 4, and the moonlight view of St. Lawrence Cathedral, Rotterdam, in No. 3.

AUGENER AND Co.

Four Songs. For Voice and Pianoforte. By S. J. Rowton. Op. 2.

MR. ROWTON has been ambitious, considering that these Songs are numbered Op. 2, for he has so overlaid his accompaniments that his singer has little to do but endeavour to struggle against them: indeed, the compositions should really have been called, for "Pianoforte and Voice." In spite of this defect, however, there is very much to commend, both in the vocal and instrumental parts of these works; for the composer has brought much musical knowledge and poetical feeling to his task. No. 1, "The Flower and the Star," written in ♩ rhythm—we know not for what reason—although faulty in some of the harmonies, is composed throughout in true sympathy with the words, and contains some exceedingly graceful vocal phrases. No. 2, "A Lake and Fairy Boat," to some excellent verses by Thomas Hood, appears to have been written for the Pianoforte, and a vocal accompaniment added afterwards. It is, however, extremely elegant, and, if delicately accompanied, would, we think, prove effective. No. 3, "I'll think of thee," has a melodious theme; but the Pianoforte part is laboured, and seems to be always getting in the way of the voice. The harmonies, however, are generally carefully written; and a well managed enharmonic modulation gives much life to the song. No. 4, "The Violets are blooming"—with a syncopated accompaniment, the bass constantly progressing in sixths with the voice—is fidgetty, and will scarcely please either singer or pianist, although the words are well expressed, and either part, taken separately, would be effective. With all the blemishes we have mentioned, there is enough merit in the songs to make us wish to meet the composer again.

Original Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—Reading the December and January numbers of your valuable Journal has set me thinking about music as connected with education, and I hope you will allow me to add my mite to the collection of observations already contributed. Mr. Lunn's remarks on the ungrateful manner in which orchestral players are treated compared with the honour and remuneration given to singers, account for certain facts which have long been a puzzle to me, viz.: first, why the violin and violoncello should be much less in demand at concerts and in society than the pianoforte and voice? secondly, why there should be hundreds of amateurs singing or playing the pianoforte for one attempting the strings? thirdly, why there should be hundreds of teachers of pianoforte and singing for one teacher whose instrument is the fiddle? Mr. B. Richards' remark as to the pedal-harp being too heavy and too expensive for a national instrument, applies almost equally to the pianoforte. Nothing contributes more to the diffusion of musical knowledge than the common use of instruments that can be easily carried about. Nor does this apply only to those classes of people who are obliged to practise strict economy in their recreations. The size of pianofortes, and the expense of frequent tuning, is an obstacle to their being used as a means of studying concerted music in private houses; yet the study of concerted music is absolutely necessary to form a player. The habit, so common among amateurs, of never playing anything but solos, is fatal to the acquirement of that feeling for time, accent, rhythm, and harmony, which lays the foundation of musical knowledge and fine taste. Those

young ladies who have not the good fortune to possess musical brothers, are generally shut out from gaining a practical acquaintance with a class of music acknowledged to be the best for forming at the same time ear and finger, viz., the pianoforte and string duetts of the great composers. Were the violin taught to all boys gifted with musical ear, just as the pianoforte is to their sisters, there would be an immense gain to the country of wholesome amusement, to say the very least. Another advantage would be that if amateur violinists became plentiful, they would soon put a stop to the present fashion of using pianofortes hideously out of tune. It is not rare to hear ladies, inhabiting houses full of the luxuries of life, playing on instruments so false as to be a torture to a cultivated ear. As for the pianofortes used by young people supposed to be studying music, they are often in such a state as to be a source of perpetual irritation to children gifted with delicate ear, while they are an effectual means of preventing improvement in those who possess only a moderate degree of musical perception. To expect children to learn music while they hear nothing but a jingling instrument, often out of tune, is about as reasonable as to expect them to profit by the teaching of a drawing master while they are compelled to draw in a room so dark that they can hardly see one line from another. Were music studied in a solid and an intellectual mode by the higher classes, and by the rich middle class, it would keep thousands of boys out of mischief, and produce a number of professional violinists whose habits and education would be very different to those of men who look to theatres as the main source of employment. Intelligence, patience, good manners, and good conduct are expected in a pianoforte teacher, who is admitted to many houses with as much confidence and respect as the family doctor or the family solicitor. I do not deny that John Bull and his wife (Lady Bull or Mrs. Bull, as the case may be) draw a very decided line between a first-rate pianoforte teacher or organist and a "fiddler." The cause of this insular prejudice arises from the circumstance of the violin not being in England a piece of domestic furniture, like the pianoforte, nor a "sacred" instrument, like the organ and harmonium. And this brings me to another suggestion. Why should not girls as well as boys learn the violin? It is too absurd in these days, when it is proposed to allow women to study all that men study, to talk about the violin being a "masculine" instrument. Is fiddling a more "masculine" employment than going across country with hounds? What a blessing it would be in families where there are several daughters destined to learn music, if one might escape the eternal pianoforte and take to the violin. Think of the wearisome work it is to listen of an evening in a dull country-house to three or four young ladies, succeeding one another, each playing a piece just like the one that went before it! Varied, perhaps, by a ballad or opera air of the most hackneyed kind. English girls learn singing so badly, that in spite of the fine voices England abounds in, the singing one hears in general society is even worse than the playing. Of course there are exceptions, but that is the rule. All this would be reformed, if the violin were studied by ladies, because that most perfect of instruments cannot be learnt (as, alas! the pianoforte can be) by a purely mechanical process. Some slight acquaintance with musical grammar is obtained by learning only the elements of violin-playing, and once in the hands of intelligent boys and girls, this noble instrument would lead them on to a thorough knowledge of the history and literature of music. Here comes to my memory Herr Engel's valuable letter to the *Athenæum*, quoted by Mr. Richards for its opinion concerning variety in tone or "Clang-tint." Most true it is that the ear delights in variety of tone, just as the eye does in variety of colour. How gladly those who hear nothing but the pianoforte hail the addition of the harp, violin, or violoncello! Indeed, such an instrument as the guitar is not to be despised by way of variety of tone. The harmonium makes a valuable accompaniment, and a duett on two