

Review

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REVIEWS.

The Letters of a Leipzig Cantor: Being the Letters of Moritz Hauptmann to Franz Hauser, Ludwig Spohr, and other Musicians. Edited by Prof. Dr. Alfred Schöne and Ferdinand Hiller. Translated and arranged by A. D. Coleridge.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.; Richard Bentley and Co.]

MORITZ HAUPTMANN, the famous theorist and teacher, has a special claim on the attention of English readers, if only for the fact that so many of our principal musicians were trained under him—Messrs. Otto Goldschmidt, J. F. Barnett, Walter Bache, Frederic Clay, F. H. Cowen, and Sir Arthur Sullivan amongst the number. Still, to the outside reader Hauptmann is little more than a name, while by the student he is only connected with some excessively abstruse speculations on Harmony and Metre. These two volumes reveal the philosopher in undress, so to speak, and in this new light Moritz Hauptmann is likely to make many friends. For to begin with, the transparent honesty of the man emerges in every line of these letters. Then, again, although his talk is almost always of music, it is redeemed from shoppiness by abundant evidences of general culture. Hauptmann had no pretensions to be regarded as a master of style. On the contrary, it was a source of regret to him that he could not write with sufficient lucidity to be thoroughly understood even by a select audience. But none the less he was a man of a thoroughly cultivated mind, who read widely and remembered what was worth remembering. These letters show, for example, that he knew Shakespeare a great deal better than nine Englishmen out of ten, while, though a thorough German, he had a perfect appreciation of the incomparable grace of the French prose style. When we add to honesty and literary feeling (not always to be found in a musician) the further qualities of generous enthusiasm, singular modesty, shrewdness, and a keen sense of humour, some notion of the attractiveness of these pages may be arrived at. Perhaps their greatest charm consists in the aphorisms or reflections in which the writer sums up his views of a school of music, an opera, or a composer. These are often exceedingly luminous. Here, for example, is a remark on the value of contrast which concert-givers might well take to heart: "It is bad for the public to hear nothing but No. 1. It spoils their critical sense. Where there is nothing but the best, the best no longer exists. If every day were Sunday, what would become of the Sabbath? Nature does not arrange all her highest peaks in a row." Here again is a shrewd saying: "Bach and Handel are not classics because they are old; they have grown old because they are classical." Sometimes his thoughts take the form of a fantastic simile, as when he says: "The phenomena of this modern Romantic Music, or whatever they call it, suggests the vegetable kingdom. Schumann's construction is that of a tree—a branch more or less and what does it matter? Mozart's is that of the human body: you cannot add an arm or a leg." Here, on another page, is a really poetic image: "The spirit of youth in Music is like a drop of dew in amber, no time can harden it." What could be better, again, than the admirably just description of the early English madrigals? "Considering its date, I have scarcely ever met with music which had so little of the date about it." Berlioz, of whom Hauptmann conceived a very sound estimate, is amusingly hit off as follows: "I think him most at his ease and much more charming when the devil is loose; when he means to be charming, he fails."

Hauptmann was unquestionably a man of strong likes and dislikes, but when one considers the nature of his studies and the tendency which they inevitably must have fostered in him to set an excessive store by form, the breadth and liberality of his criticism are truly remarkable. Take, for example, his appreciation of Ferdinand David, which shows how utterly un-Capellmeister-like was Hauptmann's attitude: "David lacks depth," he says, "but he has a graceful transparent way of writing music, and it is refreshing, nowadays, to hear anything spontaneous which has not been crammed and screwed up to the right point." There is, in fact, hardly a single composer with regard to whose merits Hauptmann was not right

more or less, with the sole exception of Wagner. Here he could only admit that Wagner was exceedingly clever, and in writing to Spohr—for whom he had a lively admiration, and who himself admired Wagner greatly—failed not to express his dissatisfaction or repulsion in the most vigorous terms. He found the "Tannhäuser" Overture "utterly hateful, inconceivably clumsy, long, and tiresome," and expressed his complete distrust of a composer "who is the author of his own libretto. It's a clumsy comparison; but it seems to me it is as if a man were to marry himself."

We have alluded to Hauptmann's sense of humour, and may be pardoned for giving a couple of examples. He dearly loved a good story, and so, in juxtaposition with the most serious or philosophical remarks, we come across passages like the following: "I should like to hear how Moritz is getting on at Düsseldorf, where I am told they are still in want of singers. That's an old story. As long as they have a good opficleide, never mind the rest! Do you remember what the comic man in a farce said to the Director when the *impresario* was at his wits' end because all his singers were down with illness? 'Let's give the "Prophet"; I've an old pair of skates at home—never mind the rest!'" In another place he falls foul of a singing master, who had written to him to say that "No one ought to be a singing master in a public institution unless he teaches from some standard book of authority, or unless he has worked out some system of his own which has met with the approbation of those who know." Now Hauptmann was no pedant, and his comment is marked by a fine irony: "Why, at this rate, Socrates would have to write Plato and Aristotle, or Christ a gospel, before they were qualified to act as public teachers! I like the answer made by Kant's servant to a painter who was staying in the house to paint the philosopher's portrait. Complaining of *ennui* one evening, he asked for a book. Answer: 'We have no books. When we want them, we write them ourselves.'" Hauptmann was fond of driving home his meaning by some quaint story of this sort. In another letter he bids Hauser go to hear "Tannhäuser" two or three times, and listen to it the first time *without prejudice*. "I am afraid," he adds, "by the second night this will have become impossible. How many hard-boiled eggs can a fasting-man eat? Answer: One; for by the time he eats the second, he is a fasting-man no longer."

In fine, whether one agrees with Hauptmann or not, one cannot help being attracted by the personality revealed in these letters. There is not a trace of priggishness in them from cover to cover, and we are sincerely indebted to Mr. Coleridge for introducing them to the English reader in a version which is invariably readable, and often exceedingly racy.

Twelve New Songs by British Composers. Edited by Harold Boulton.

[The Leadenhall Press. Novello, Ewer and Co.]

In his preface to this handsomely printed quarto volume, the editor speaks of the blighting influence of Puritanism on music in this country, and the equally malign results accruing from the devotion to foreign art which set in after the Restoration. He is slightly incorrect in stating that in Elizabeth's time the "glee" was cultivated by all persons of education, for this form of music was essentially of later date. Neither is it accurate to say that the "royal line of German giants" began with Haydn. Everyone will agree, however, that England is now seriously endeavouring to recover the prestige it once held as a musical nation, and it was a happy thought to bring together a series of lyrics by our most talented composers, to show in a compact form what we are capable of in, at any rate, one branch of art industry. The composers selected are Messrs. Barnby, Cellier, Corder, Cowen, Harford Lloyd, MacCunn, Mackenzie, Parry, Somervell, Stanford, Goring Thomas, and Charles Wood—a goodly list, and, but for the absence of the name of Sullivan, thoroughly representative. It will be noted that the songs are printed in the alphabetical order of their composers' names, this plan being adopted in order to avoid invidious distinctions. Mr. Boulton has supplied the verses, which are mainly sentimental; in one or two instances, humorous; and in all, fanciful, elegant, and eminently singable. The songs vary considerably in point

of structure and elaboration, and, of course, the idiosyncracies of their authors are frequently displayed. The aim has evidently been, in all instances, to write something superior to the trashy shop ballads which, for too long a period, were regarded as the best that we could produce in the way of song writing, and the result is a series of which no musical people need feel ashamed. It would occupy too much space to describe each composition separately, and we shall not make any odious comparisons, but to vocalists of every sort we commend the volume as in the highest degree worthy their attention. Its attractiveness is enhanced by a frontispiece in Mr. Frank Dicksee's best manner, representing a young girl playing a two-manual harpsichord.

Novello's Parish Choir Book, Nos. 76-85.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE standard of excellence maintained hitherto in this useful publication shows no falling off in the ten numbers recently issued. The simple harmonies to the Apostles' Creed, monotoned on F, by W. Staton (No. 76), will prove useful to organists who do not possess the gift of extemporisation. No. 77 consists of an extremely unpretentious setting in chant form of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis from the accomplished pen of Mr. C. Lee Williams. The version of the same Canticles by G. J. Bennett (No. 78) was composed for the Sunday evening choir at St. Paul's Cathedral, and, though not in chant form, is based on one theme, constantly repeated, with varying harmonies. No. 79, Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in E flat, by the Rev. A. W. Hamilton Gell, is more elaborate than any of the foregoing though written in ordinary four-part harmony. The composer indulges in startling transitions of key and his service is decidedly modern in character. More settings of the evening Canticles have to be noted. Mr. Charles Wood's version in E flat (No. 80) is flowing and melodious and alternately in unison and four-part harmony. Mr. Charles Macpherson's in F is described as in irregular chant form, but there is little to distinguish it from an ordinary plain service, and within its modest scope it is noteworthy for musicianly feeling and general effectiveness. Another setting in E flat by the same composer (No. 82) is distinguished by similar qualities, but is, on the whole, lighter in style, being throughout in triple measure. No. 83 is a Te Deum, by Arthur W. Marchant, in E flat, quiet in tone and written in the old-fashioned *alla breve* measure. No. 84, Benedictus, in the same key and by the same composer, is similar in character, and, of course, is intended as a companion to the previous number. The last of the series, a Benedicite by W. G. Wood, is in one respect somewhat peculiar. The composer gives us four double chants, the first in D, the second in G, and the third and fourth in C. These are in three-two measure, and are all pleasing, especially the second, which is very melodious. The Gloria Patri, in which duple measure is used, is also effective.

Novello's Octavo Anthems, Nos. 359-371.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE first six of these Anthems are from the pen of Frederick Brandeis, and are entitled "Hymn Anthems"—that is to say, something between a congregational hymn and a composition intended for choir only. They are sweet and flowing, and it is easy to imagine that in places where congregational singing is encouraged and cultured they might be rendered with heartiness by the entire band of worshippers. No. 365, "Sing, O Daughter of Zion," by Dr. William Rea, is a vigorous full Anthem for four voices, with some vigorous *fugato* passages. No. 366, "Ho! everyone that thirsteth," by J. Maude Crament, is intended for mission services, and is studiously simple, the composer seldom even glancing beyond relative keys. In its unpretentious way, however, it is to be commended. No. 367, "The Lord is King," by H. J. King, opens in the style of a military march, but subsequently becomes more church-like, though throughout the writing is free and unconventional. A tenor soloist is required. No. 368, "Christ is risen," by J. Maude Crament, is of course an Easter Anthem, solid and devotional rather than brilliant. No. 369, "Sing, O Heavens," by T. Tallis Trimmell,

begins and ends with broad dignified choruses, between which is a brief but expressive tenor solo. No. 370, another Easter Anthem, "Christ, the Lord, is risen to-day," by Rev. E. V. Hall, is melodious but hymn-like in its simplicity, and may easily be learned alike by choir and congregation. No. 371, "I will set his dominion," by Horatio W. Parker, is for Christmas or general use. It is modern in feeling and is written with much boldness and freedom of style, as an instance of which it may be noted that the first and last chorus in A flat are separated by a "verse" or quartet in G.

Highland Ballad for Violin (Op. 47, No. 1); *Two Pieces for Violin* (Op. 47, No. 2). By A. C. Mackenzie.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

FOLLOWING up the striking success he achieved with his "Pibroch," Dr. Mackenzie has now given us another composition, avowedly Scottish in character, and almost of equal importance in length and general significance. The Highland Ballad is an extended piece commencing and closing in D, *Lento*, 4-4 measure, but with the major portion in 3-4 time, *Andantino espressivo*. Alternately tender and passionate, the music is throughout strikingly unconventional, the characteristic turns in the melody being associated with modern and frequently beautiful harmonic progressions. Though not strictly in sonata or concerto form, the Ballad is symmetrical, and it need scarcely be added that the solo part shows consummate knowledge of the *technique* of the violin. The two pieces are entitled respectively Barcarolla and Villanella, the first in G minor and the second in G major. They are both equally remarkable for freshness in phraseology and what may be termed breezy unconventionality, united, of course, to perfect musicianship. The Villanella is irresistibly catching and is certain to become a favourite piece in the repertory of violinists. It should be added that the pianoforte part in Dr. Mackenzie's compositions is not merely an accompaniment, but is intrinsically interesting, being full of musicianly touches.

Novello's Short Anthems, Nos. 38 and 39.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

The first of these, "God so loved the world," by Matthew Kingston, is described as being "for Trinity season, or for general use." It is an extremely pleasing and expressive little composition in one symmetrical movement, three-two measure. The succeeding Anthem, "O ye that love the Lord," by J. W. Elliott, is equally simple and almost equally attractive. The unusual cadence at the climax is very effective.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE number of operatic works produced at the Royal Opera of Berlin during the past year amounted to forty-nine. As regards the number of performances accorded to individual composers, Wagner was, of course, *facile princeps* with seventy representations of nine works; Mascagni coming in second with thirty-three performances of the one work by which he has so rapidly gained popularity; C. M. von Weber being third with twenty-eight performances, including twenty-two devoted to his otherwise rarely-heard "Oberon."

Tschaikowsky's opera "Eugène Onégin" was announced to be performed, for the first time in Germany, last month at the Hamburg Stadt-Theater.

A series of "model performances" of opera, ranging from Gluck to Wagner, is to be given from July to September next, at the Coburg Court Theatre, under the auspices of the art-loving Duke Ernest, and under the direction of Professor Julius Hey.

Baron Franchetti's opera "Asrael" was performed last month, for the first time at Munich, where, however, it met with but moderate success. The work was also produced last month at Dresden, Gotha, and at Prague.

Anton Rubinstein, who but rarely plays in public now, will give a Concert this month at Berlin, in the course of which he will play his own Pianoforte Concerto in E flat major. The proceeds are to be devoted to charitable purposes.