

Review

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Madame Angus Weldon, who has a rich contralto voice, was enthusiastically encoired in "The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest," Miss Arabella Warren gave, with good feeling, "I mourn as a dove," from "St. Peter;" and Mr. J. H. Croft sang with much pathos, "If with all your hearts," and Mattei's "Non è ver." A selection of choruses, glees and quartets were very creditably performed by lady and gentlemen amateurs from the neighbourhood.

MR. JOHN GILL has retired from the management of the Choir at St. James's, Marylebone. All the Choir Boys left with Mr. Gill, and have presented him with a handsome inkstand, as a mark of their esteem and regard.

THE directors of the Crystal Palace Company have fixed the 1st of May for a grand National Festival in celebration of the recovery of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; and have commissioned Mr. Arthur Sullivan to compose a *Te Deum*, for voices and orchestra, to be performed on the largest scale in the centre transept on that day.

THE National Music Meetings, to be held during the ensuing summer at the Crystal Palace, have already awakened a lively interest amongst those who desire the healthy progress of every branch of the art in this country. We understand that a Council will be formed, consisting of the most eminent authorities in music, from which body the competitors for the prizes will elect a jury by ballot. It will be seen by an advertisement in our present number that Messrs. Novello will publish the whole of the choral music to be used on the occasion. Most of the works in Classes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, will be issued in the cheap form, so that every facility will be afforded to Choral Societies for procuring and preparing the pieces for competition, the number and order of which are to be decided by the jury in each class. The first annual meeting is announced for June 27, 29, July 2, 4, and 6.

WE understand that it is the intention of Herr Stockhausen to give a series of Three Recitals during the ensuing month, consisting of selections from Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin*, and *Winterreise*, and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. He will be assisted by Miss Agnes Zimmermann and Madlle. Sophie Loewe. The singing of this eminent artist has so enlisted the sympathies of the musical public during his stay in this country that little doubt can exist of the interest with which this announcement will be received; for, apart from the pleasure which must be derived from the performance of comparatively unknown works, so intellectual a reading of them as may be confidently anticipated must appeal most powerfully to all the lovers of high-class German music. Herr Stockhausen, we are informed, will only sing in London during the present season at these Recitals and at the "Oratorio Concerts."

Reviews.

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. Anthem for four voices, chorus and semi-chorus, by J. Stainer.

THE translation of Dr. Stainer from one of the Oxford Chapels to the Cathedral of London calls particular attention to those artistic labours, which are his credentials for the new office. His publication of a book on musical theory is a justification to the world of any tenets peculiar to himself, and reference must be made to that work for explanation of some passages in the anthem before us that seem unaccountable upon principles elsewhere enunciated. A course of harmony for instance at the turning over from page 3 to 4, and the singular progression from a second inversion of a chord of G minor between bars 2 and 3 at the top of page 14, are remarkable, and to some hearers,

not satisfactory. The anthem is in four movements, one of which is a choral recitative, and in this the novel device is employed of omitting the bar-lines, which gives the utmost freedom to the singers, but at the cost of control; since, even, where a conductor was present, it would be difficult to make a number of executants hold the same path without defining roadmarks, but where, as in a church, they must be without direction, the difficulty must be increased, if not rendered insuperable. The work is avowedly designed for use on Saints' days, Ordinations, at Choral Festivals, and occasions of general Thanksgivings. Its extent and its variety of character fit it for such seasons; the second movement, "How beautiful upon the mountains," being for semi-chorus or for four solo voices, will make a good contrast to what precedes and follows; and the organ part, which is often independent of the voices, will much enrich their effect. This last is a resource of which our elder English writers made little avail; and it is turned to best account by such a master of the instrument as is the author of the piece under notice.

The Erl-King's Daughter. Ballad, founded on Danish Legends. The English version by Miss Louisa Vance. The music composed for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, by Niels W. Gade. Op. 30.

"WHETHER we become acquainted or not," writes Mendelssohn to Gade in 1842, "I beg you will always look on me as one who will never cease to regard your works with love and sympathy, and who will ever feel the greatest and most cordial delight in meeting with such an artist as yourself." In spite of the years which have elapsed since this letter was penned, how little progress have the works of this composer made, especially in this country. And yet the Cantata before us, had we indeed no other composition by which to judge, affords ample proof not only of his creative faculty, but of the possession of a dramatic power which is too rare to be disregarded. The subject of the Cantata is based upon old Danish ballads, the English version, by Miss Louisa Vance, being really so excellent as to appear as if it had been originally written in that language. A short instrumental Introduction, in which occurs the subject afterwards sung by the Erl-maidens, leads to a chorus which forms what is called the "Prologue" to the work. The first Part then commences with a chorus (the voices quaintly beginning on a ♯) interspersed with solos for *Oluf* and his Mother. The principal theme of this piece is extremely melodious, and a prominent figure in the accompaniment occurring in various keys, is a highly interesting point. After a characteristic song for *Oluf*, a duet with his Mother, commencing in A minor, is effectively concluded by the chorus bursting in with a *forte*, upon the words "The black steed rushes," first in the minor, and afterwards in the tonic major. The song for *Oluf* at the commencement of Part 2, "Night, thou art silent," is extremely beautiful. The voice starts upon a dominant seventh, with a striking melody; and the accompaniment in triplets, and afterwards in rapid semiquavers, gives much intensity to the expression of the words. An exquisitely light and fanciful chorus of Erl-maidens then occurs (the theme of which is heard, as we have said, in the instrumental Introduction to the "Prologue") which is twice most effectively interrupted by a solo for *Oluf*. This is succeeded by a dramatic scene for the *Erl-King's Daughter*, *Oluf* and Chorus, which ends the second Part. A "Morning Hymn" ushers in Part 3, the calm and devotional character of which is in admirable sympathy with the words. The two last numbers of the Part are chiefly choral, but with most effective solos for *Oluf* and his Mother, the death of the knight being expressed with true pathos. The passionate grief of the Mother having subsided, the chorus sings with deep solemnity the words "Sir Oluf is dead;" and with a brief choral "Epilogue," the Cantata ends. We can of course give but a faint idea of the beauties of this work by the few lines our space has permitted us to devote to it; but we have little doubt that now it is for the first time available in this country, and more especially in the

cheap octavo edition, Choral Societies will eagerly procure it and judge for themselves.

Der Freischütz (The Freeshooter); Romantic Opera, in three acts. Composed by Carl Maria von Weber. Edited, and in greater part translated into English, by Natalia Macfarren.

In preparing a carefully edited version of this work for the English public, it became necessary for Mrs. Macfarren boldly to state her reason for very materially differing from the translation which time, rather than artistic taste, has sanctioned in this country. An Opera so thoroughly German both in the story and music as "*Der Freischütz*" cannot be baldly rendered into English rhyme by one who does not deeply sympathise with the earnest manner in which the composer has set the original words; and we are glad to find therefore, in a note to the present edition, that no portion of the accepted version has been retained (save in the first lines of some of the best known pieces) whenever it interfered with the due expression of the music. As one instance of the improvement effected in this new translation, we may mention the *Scena* generally known as "*Softly sighs*." It is impossible to imagine words more thoroughly appropriate to the opening phrase of the beautiful prayer than those which Mrs. Macfarren has written, "*Softly sighing—day is dying,*" or any more opposed to the rhythmical expression of the melody than the familiar ones, "*Softly sighs the—voice of evening*." Again in the duet, No. 6, usually known as "*Come be gay*," the opening solo is always sung in English to words which are not only no translation of the original, but actually have no reference at all to what is taking place upon the stage. That such a wanton disregard of a composer's intention should still be tolerated is a proof how small an amount of attention is given by our native vocalists to the connection between the words and the notes which they are uttering; and the thanks of all admirers of Weber's *chef d'œuvre* are due therefore to the editor of the version now before us for translating the German text, not only in the duet just mentioned, but throughout the Opera, with that reverence for genius which seems as rare as it is laudable. The indications of the instrumentation, if well studied, will give a very excellent idea of the masterly scoring in this work; and it may be also stated, as an important feature in the edition, that the spoken dialogue is the acting version as performed in Germany, largely and most judiciously curtailed from the original of Kind. In every respect "*Der Freischütz*" is one of the most perfect of the many Operas already issued in this popular series.

Festal March, for the Pianoforte. By J. Baptiste Calkin.

If we were merely to say that Mr. Calkin has written a really good March, we should scarcely do him all the justice he deserves, for the festal character of the composition before us is certainly one of its greatest recommendations. The leading subject is bold and well harmonised, and the second theme, in the relative minor, is tuneful and well considered as a contrast. The *coda* is vigorous and brilliant; and, without making any extraordinary demands upon the player, the piece will be certain to prove effective. The March is also carefully arranged by the composer for four hands.

Novello's Part-Song Book (Second Series). A Collection of Four-part Songs, composed by Henry Smart.

This book, forming Volume 8 of the second series of Novello's Part-Song Book, contains a choice selection of these compositions by one of the most successful writers of the day. Those who possess themselves of the entire work will have indeed a mine of wealth to work upon, for although some of the songs may be liked better than others, there is an almost indescribable charm about each which cannot fail to produce its effect, even with a mixed audience. It would be impossible to mention the characteristics of every composition in the volume, considering that they number twenty-one, but some of our favourites must be pointed out. No. 1, "*The Shep-*

herd's Farewell," has a smooth and appropriate melody, a beautiful point being gained in the second verse by the Sopranos, Tenors and Basses singing the words "*She sleeps, perchance she dreams of me*" *staccato*, whilst the Altos sustain a note to the end of the phrase. No. 3 is a really religious "*Ave Maria*," simple in the extreme, but exquisitely voiced, and full of effect. No. 4, "*Spring*," flows in $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm, with a true feeling for the words. We especially like the last three bars, where the Sopranos mount to the high A \sharp , holding it whilst the other parts move in smooth quavers. In No. 6, "*Hymn to Cynthia*," the composer has completely caught the spirit of Ben Jonson's quaint poetry, and the result is a capital part-song, which will however require careful and intelligent singing to give it due effect. No. 7, "*Cradle Song*," is a perfect gem: the Basses, divided, sustain the key-note and fifth, the Altos enter on the third bar, singing the word "*lullaby*" twice in the same measure, whilst the Tenors, and, afterwards the Sopranos, have a *legato* melody of extreme beauty. These effects are occasionally varied, and after some transient modulations, the return to the original subject is managed with consummate skill. It would be impossible to speak too highly in praise of this song; from first to last, it is the work of a refined artist. No. 9, "*Dream, baby, dream*," is another very excellent composition, full of sympathetic feeling and highly effective. No. 13, "*Sweet Vesper Hymn*," has a melodious theme, commencing with the Tenors, the placid nature of which proves how deeply the composer studies the nature of the words he undertakes to set. No. 15, "*Stars of the Summer Night*," expresses Longfellow's popular verses with remarkable fidelity. The subject is very striking, and the voice parts are occasionally broken with excellent effect. There is much character in No. 16, "*Wind thy horn*." Starting with a bold movement in four parts, we afterwards get some effective points by repetitions of the cry "*Hilloho*," whilst a note is sustained by the other voices. No. 17, "*The Land of Wonders*" (the words translated from the German of Schiller) has a *legato* theme, the repose of which is extremely sympathetic with the poetry. The change from triple to double rhythm gives much interest to the close of the song; and the conclusion of the Sopranos upon the fifth of the chord is also a point worth attention. No. 18, "*Ye little birds that sit and sing*," may be cited as a well written and melodious composition; and No. 21, "*Now May is here*," which is somewhat more varied in contrapuntal effects than most of the songs in the collection, is strikingly beautiful throughout. We can scarcely doubt that a volume so rich in contents will command a rapid and extensive sale.

CRAMER, WOOD AND CO.

Three Musical Sketches for the Pianoforte Composed by C. W. Smith.

MR. SMITH writes like a cultivated pianist, but as his compositions do not come under our notice for the first time, we candidly confess that we had hoped for unmistakable signs of progress—not so much in the ideas as in the forms of his pieces. The "*Lieder ohne Worte*" school is a delusive one. A very common-place melody singing at the top of a series of arpeggios, is apt to sound very much better than it really is; and we should counsel any composer who devotes his attention to the production of these wordless songs to play his theme simply with the harmonies and ask himself how he likes it. Mr. Smith's first sketch has really so little save its gracefulness to recommend it that we doubt whether it would repay the trouble required to play the two hands with sufficient smoothness to ensure the effect required by the author. No. 2, a Presto in G Minor, although too Mendelssohnian in character, we like much better. There is vivacity in the opening subject; and the second theme, notwithstanding the monotony caused by its being in the same key, has a tranquil character which is extremely effective. The "*Andante Cantabile*," No. 3, is a smooth, flowing