

Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 37, No. 644 (Oct. 1, 1896), p. 673

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3368978>

Accessed: 28-10-2015 20:46 UTC

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*Action Songs.* Books III. and IV. Words by May Gillington. Music by Annie E. Armstrong.

*The Fair Maids of February.* Short Cantata for Female voices. Libretto by May Gillington. Music by Richard H. Walthew.

[Robert Cocks and Co.]

THE merit of this series of action songs is fully maintained in the third and fourth books. The little stories are brightly told in rhythmic verse, and the directions for the illustrative gestures are clear and simple. No less commendable are the musical settings. These are melodious and well accentuated, and their musical interest is increased by their effective harmonic treatment. These songs will not only content little folks, but are calculated to cultivate perception, rhythm, and appropriateness of movement.

The libretto of the cantata is based upon a dainty story of poetical character, the "Fair Maids of February" being the common name in the South of England for snow-drops. These are offered by a fairy the choice of love or perpetual beauty, the former being declined and the latter accepted. Mr. Walthew's music is well suited to the subject and effectively laid out for the voices. It comprises two contralto solos, a trio, and three choruses, all of which contain proofs of the talent and taste of the composer.

*Old English Suite.* For Pianoforte Solo. By William Creser. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS is a pianoforte arrangement by the composer of an Orchestral Suite which was produced at a concert by the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society, at the Queen's Hall, on May 13 last. It consists of three movements, the thematic material of which has been derived from old English popular songs. The first number contains "Goe from my window, my love, my love," which serves for an introduction; "Good morning, pretty maid," a traditional Gloucestershire melody; and "Cupid, the pretty plough-boy," the two last-named forming the first and second subjects of the movement. In the second number use has been made of "A jug of this," a song taken down by the late Dr. W. A. Barrett from the lips of a Wiltshire farm labourer; and "Phillida flouts me," also found in Barrett's collection of old English ditties. Three dances are utilised in the concluding movement of this Suite. A country dance, dating from about 1300, from a MS. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford; "Sir Eglamore," from the "Merry Drollery" of the period of Charles II.; and "Parthenia," a tune found in tablature notation in John Playford's "Introduction to the skill of Music," printed in 1665. No attempt has been made to subject this material to elaborate development; and the pianoforte version has been simplified to bring the music well within the abilities of the average pianist. The Suite, however, is scholarly, extremely bright, and the character of the old ditties is well preserved. It is "merry music" of the best kind, and, played with spirit, will never fail to give pleasure to its listeners.

*Original Compositions for the Organ.* Nos. 244-246.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE recent additions to this valuable library for organists comprise, in No. 244, an Elegy, by E. Silas, based upon themes from the anthems "My beloved spake" and "I was glad," by Henry Purcell (and played at the Purcell Festival last year). These have been cleverly adapted to the genius of the organ, and the result is a highly impressive and effective piece, eminently suitable for church use. It will present no difficulties to the average organist. No. 245 consists of an *Andante Larghetto* and *Allegro*, by J. Varley Roberts. The first-named is one of those quiet and graceful pieces which are very useful to the church organist. The *Larghetto* and *Allegro* are also easy to play, and will, doubtless, be welcome. No. 246 is a Postlude in G, by Charles Steggall. This is a somewhat extended movement, based upon a theme of considerable vigour, and is treated in a way familiar to those who are acquainted with this composer's works. The contrapuntal writing is effective and flowing, and the more rapid pedal passages are conveniently arranged for the feet. A clever organist will also find many opportunities for the legitimate display of the resources of his instrument.

*Hast thou not heard.* Anthem for festal or general use. Composed by H. Ralph Jackson.

*The Man of Sorrows.* The passages of Scripture arranged by Edith A. Mason. Music by Edward Mason. [Weekes and Co.]

THERE is much merit of a popular kind in Mr. Jackson's anthem, the part-writing being ingeniously devised to secure the greatest effect with the least demand upon the abilities of the executants. There are several solo passages for the voices, which are well supported by the organ accompaniment.

"The Man of Sorrows" is a devotional Service for use on Good Friday, and consists of an arrangement of some well-known hymns and music to be sung by the choir, together with appropriate Scriptural passages, which presumably are to be read by the Priest.

*The Coming of the King.* A sacred Cantata for Female voices. Words by Helen Marion Burnside. Music by Myles B. Foster. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS work is dedicated "to the ladies of the Lake Erie Seminary, Cleveland, U.S.A.," and is admirably suited to the requirements of all such like establishments during the forthcoming Advent season. The argument supposes the presence of three angels—*Hope*, *Peace*, and *Goodwill*—with their sister spirits, who are waiting for the rising of the Star which shall betoken the birth of Christ, and the joyful anticipations of these heavenly beings form a bright and pleasing poem. After a brief instrumental introduction, the chorus sings an exceedingly melodious and rhythmic number, written in three parts and containing some effective imitative passages. This is followed by a soprano solo for *Hope*, which will present no difficulties to an average singer. The next six pages are occupied by a duet for second soprano (*Peace*) and contralto (*Goodwill*). This is an excellent number, and will prove attractive to all vocalists possessing refined musical taste. The concluding chorus also contains another soprano solo and an effective passage for contraltos in unison. These and some clever harmonic changes go to make up a spirited and impressive *Finale*.

*Requiem.* By Charles Gounod. English words adapted by Joseph Bennett. Pianoforte accompaniment by Henri Büsser. [Metzler and Co.]

THIS is the last important work of the celebrated French musician, who is stated on the title-page to have died while playing a portion of it at St. Cloud, on October 15, 1893. It consists of six numbers: Introit or Kyrie, Dies Iræ, Sanctus, Benedictus, Pie Jesu, and Agnus Dei. The opening phrase is a portion of the chromatic scale comprising seven semitones, and this passage may be said to indicate the method pursued in the work, the climaxes being in nearly every case attained by a repetition of phrases at the distance of a tone or semitone. As the work progresses this leads to a certain sense of monotony, which is increased by the feeble nature of the thematic material. Indeed, the music is heavy without being impressive. The work contains solo parts for soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass, with chorus, which occasionally is written in six parts. The part-writing is harmonic rather than contrapuntal, and effects are striven for by massive chords which frequently are but distantly related. Two settings of the Benedictus are included, the second omitting the chorus parts appended to the first, and thus being converted into a duet for soprano and tenor.

*Bordogni's Twenty-Four Vocal Exercises for Mezzo-Soprano.* Edited by Alberto Randegger.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

MARCO BORDOGNI, who died at Paris in 1856, was for many years one of the most distinguished professors of singing at the Paris Conservatoire, and these exercises were doubtless intended to form part of his projected Vocal Instructor, the completion of which was arrested by his death. They are admirably designed to give that command of vocal inflection which distinguished the accomplished singer, and their value is distinctly increased by the addition of breath marks and careful editing, which they have received from so experienced a teacher of the art as Mr. Randegger.